

# First Steps Exit Family Survey

## Statewide Summary

August 1, 2004-June 1, 2006

**Total surveys sent: 4306**

**Total surveys returned: 1374**

1. How old is your child?						
23 (1.67%)	44 (3.20%)	91 (6.62%)	1,205 (87.70%)	11 (0.80%)		
Less than one year	1 yr - less than 2 yrs	2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	3 years and over	Did not answer		
2. When did your child begin receiving First Steps services?						
343 (24.96%)	309 (22.49%)	661 (48.11%)	24 (1.75%)	37 (2.69%)		
Less than one year	1 yr - less than 2 yrs	2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	3 years and over	Did not answer / did not know		
4. It was easy to learn about First Steps, to find out if my child was eligible for services, and to obtain the early intervention services that were needed for my child and family.						
471 (34.28%)	643 (46.80%)	163 (11.86%)	72 (5.24%)	12 (0.87%)	5 (0.36%)	8 (0.58%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
5. The results of my child's assessments or evaluations were explained to me in ways I understood.						
749 (54.51%)	593 (43.16%)	19 (1.38%)	4 (0.29%)	2 (0.15%)	2 (0.15%)	5 (0.36%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
6. I feel the service coordinator and early intervention providers listened to me and respected me.						
854 (62.15%)	461 (33.55%)	28 (2.04%)	18 (1.31%)	3 (0.22%)	0 (0.00%)	10 (0.73%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
7. I received information and explanations about our family's legal rights such as due process and procedural safeguards.						
739 (53.78%)	514 (37.41%)	43 (3.13%)	8 (0.58%)	44 (3.20%)	21 (1.53%)	5 (0.36%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
8. In creating our Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP), I was asked about areas where our family felt things were fine and where we felt we needed help.						
861 (62.66%)	478 (34.79%)	11 (0.80%)	2 (0.15%)	9 (0.66%)	7 (0.51%)	6 (0.44%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
9. Our family routinely used the help of our service coordinator.						
381 (27.73%)	585 (42.58%)	252(18.34%)	77 (5.60%)	12 (0.87%)	50 (3.64%)	17 (1.24%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
10. Our service coordinator helped my family, in a timely manner, get the services we needed.						
674 (49.05%)	515 (37.48%)	97 (7.06%)	51 (3.71%)	10 (0.73%)	18 (1.31%)	9 (0.66%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
11. Since being part of First Steps, I know how to work with professionals and advocate for what my child needs.						
605 (44.03%)	592 (43.09%)	64 (4.66%)	25 (1.82%)	23 (1.67%)	47 (3.42%)	18 (1.31%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
12. We received all of the services listed in our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).						
755 (54.95%)	498 (36.24%)	42 (3.06%)	13 (0.95%)	40 (2.91%)	14 (1.02%)	12 (0.87%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
13. The people who worked with my child knew a lot about my child's disability and how to work with him/her.						
771 (56.11%)	476 (34.64%)	72 (5.24%)	19 (1.38%)	13 (0.95%)	13 (0.95%)	10 (0.73%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
14. I received information and explanations about the services my child needed and believe the services my child and the family received were appropriate.						
756 (55.02%)	539 (39.23%)	38 (2.77%)	12 (0.87%)	7 (0.51%)	9 (0.66%)	13 (0.95%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
15. First Steps helped my family and my child's caregivers increase our confidence and competence.						
706 (51.38%)	533 (38.79%)	53 (3.86%)	18 (1.31%)	15 (1.09%)	37 (2.69%)	12 (0.87%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

16. The early intervention services in my family's Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) had a significant impact on my child's development.						
862 (62.74%)	391 (28.46%)	43 (3.13%)	18 (1.31%)	31 (2.26%)	20 (1.46%)	9 (0.66%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
17. The information and help my family received through First Steps made our family better off.						
825 (60.04%)	439 (31.95%)	39 (2.84%)	15 (1.09%)	21 (1.53%)	24 (1.75%)	11 (0.80%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
18. The ability of our family to work and play together as a family is pretty normal even though we have a child with special needs.						
753 (54.80%)	418 (30.42%)	51 (3.71%)	9 (0.66%)	9 (0.66%)	118 (8.59%)	15 (1.09%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
19. First Steps has enhanced/increased my child's participation in family and community activities.						
667 (48.54%)	436 (31.73%)	90 (6.55%)	18 (1.31%)	40 (2.91%)	104 (7.57%)	18 (1.31%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

### Questions relating to transitioning out of First Steps

1. My service coordinator informed our family about the transition process and options available for our child.						
694 (50.51%)	499 (36.32%)	82 (5.97%)	32 (2.33%)	11 (0.80%)	39 (2.84%)	17 (1.24%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
2. The information provided helped me understand the transition process.						
601 (43.74%)	566 (41.19%)	86 (6.26%)	29 (2.11%)	17 (1.24%)	59 (4.29%)	16 (1.16%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
3. A transition meeting was held six months prior to my child's third birthday so a smooth and effective transition occurred at age three.						
553 (40.25%)	448 (32.61%)	91 (6.62%)	50 (3.64%)	28 (2.04%)	170 (12.37%)	31 (2.26%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

### Questions relating to experiences after leaving First Steps

1. Is your child eligible for early childhood special education (ECSE) services through your local school district under Part B of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?						
957 (69.65%)	251 (18.27%)			105 (7.64%)		
Yes (continue on to question #2)	No (skip to question #7)			I do not know (continue to question #2)		
2. Is your child receiving ECSE services?						
905 (65.87%)	190 (13.83%)			1 (0.07%)		
Yes (continue on to question #3)	No (skip to question #7)			I do not know (continue to question #2)		
3. In creating our child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), I was asked about areas where our family thought things were fine and where my child and family needed help.						
509 (37.05%)	420 (30.57%)	31 (2.26%)	11 (0.80%)	10 (0.73%)	31 (2.26%)	361 (26.27%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
4. The special education services our child currently receives are appropriate to meet the child's needs.						
500 (36.39%)	349 (25.40%)	72 (5.24%)	20 (1.46%)	19 (1.38%)	53 (3.86%)	361 (26.27%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
5. We are receiving all of the services listed in the IEP.						
504 (36.68%)	369 (26.86%)	30 (2.18%)	13 (0.95%)	34 (2.47%)	59 (4.29%)	365 (26.56%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
6. Special education services are helping our family improve our child's development.						
582 (42.36%)	329 (23.94%)	20 (1.46%)	9 (0.66%)	16 (1.16%)	55 (4.00%)	363 (26.42%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer
7. Our family is accessing other community services and resources such as Parents as Teachers, Head Start or child care to support our family and our child.						
452 (32.90%)	440 (32.02%)	139(10.12%)	30 (2.18%)	19 (1.38%)	240 (17.47%)	51 (3.71%)
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I Do Not Know	Does Not Apply	Did not answer

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### Question related to Community Resources

What community resources were you made aware of through First Steps? *(Question added for February 1, 2006 mailing)*

96 (26.52%)	Parent support groups	56 (15.47%)	SSI	49 (13.54%)	Childcare services
55 (15.19%)	DSS	59 (16.30%)	DMH regional centers	51 (14.09%)	Co Health Services (WIC)
19 (5.25%)	DHSS	60 (16.57%)	Medical services	36 (9.94%)	Transportation services
41 (11.33%)	Library	6 (1.66%)	CPD	8 (2.21%)	Chrch/Relig. facility
115 (31.77%)	*Chose more than one resource				
146 (40.33%)	*Chose no resources or N/A				
12 (3.31%)	*Chose no Ethnic/Race group				
				19 (5.25%)	Service organization
				27 (7.46%)	Other

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### Question related to Race/Ethnicity

What is your race/ethnicity? *(Question added to February 1, 2006 mailing)*

316 (87.29%)	White
22 (6.08%)	Black/African-American
6 (1.66%)	Hispanic/Latino
4 (1.10%)	Asian/Pacific Islander
2 (0.55%)	American Indian/Alaskan Native
12 (3.31%)	No Response

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# *First Steps Exit Family Survey*

*Note: Comments are typed as written on the surveys with the exception of the correction of most misspellings. Names and other personally identifiable information of children, families and providers have been redacted.*

I do not feel that our service coordinator provided much help. She would rarely contact me. However, I was very happy with the intake coordinator and the therapists that my son saw. Overall, I was very pleased with my First Steps experience.

We had an excellent coordinator who had a vast knowledge in our child's specific disability. I will always be thankful to the person who introduced me to the program and who worked so quickly to get me the help I needed. We had just moved to this state and it was a very stressful time for our family.

The First Steps program was instrumental in the development of our son. At age two and a half, our son was diagnosed with Fragile X Syndrome which is the most common inherited cause of mental impairment. There is no cure and the only treatment is early intervention. Fortunately for us, we were already enrolled in First Steps and have been told by various different professionals that his good progress to date was in large part due to the First Steps program. We are so grateful for this program as it is so important at this young age. The only negative experience we've had was when we transitioned to ECSE, the amount of therapy decreased and went from private therapy to group therapy. We feel our son could be getting more benefit from therapy and or private therapy as we had with First Steps. Thank you.

If it was not for the First Steps program, I would have had to take out a loan to get my daughter's hearing aides. My insurance company would not pay anything for her hearing aids. They said it was an exclusion from our plan. My county doesn't have a special program to meet the needs of a hearing impaired child. My daughter goes to a deaf school. She is making great progress. She was also able to utilize the early intervention program.

I am so very thankful for the First Steps program. This was my third child to go through it. All three of my boys benefited greatly from First Steps and ECSE. The two oldest are in school now and no longer require services. It was great to have an involved service coordinator who helped us through each step. The therapists we used were all very knowledgeable, friendly and extremely helpful, especially in giving us suggestions of things we could do to help our children in between sessions. I think First Steps is a wonderful program. I don't know what we would have done without it.

I feel that without First Steps help and therapy, my son would still not be able to communicate with us and he would be very frustrated. I am very grateful for all the program has done for my family. Thank you.

Parents As Teachers needs to let parents know about First Steps as soon as they see a sign of delay. She did not let us know until almost three years of age.

I don't speak English well. So I need to understand in Spanish.

To the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

I am a parent of a child with Down Syndrome. In response to the recent consideration of cutting a very important program; the First Steps program started with my son at the early age of three months, and continued until he was three years old. While coming out to our home, they taught us many things. Our son had four different types of therapy which included physical therapy, which taught him how to crawl, sit-up, and eventually walk; occupational therapy, which taught him to use hand and eye coordination such as building blocks, and snapping together objects; developmental therapy (which is not normally covered by insurance) which taught him to be more patient, and to do many early childhood abilities. And speech therapy, the most important to us. In addition, our son has many other issues. He has low muscle tone that creates a big problem when he eats his food or drinks from his bottle. The therapist taught us how to teach him to do all of these important things. We would not have known what to do if they hadn't taught us how to do this. Through the last three and half years I have grown as my son has grown! We have learned together, and I have been able to teach him what I have learned through therapy. I would not have known what to do if we didn't have the First Steps program as a guide through the most crucial years of my son's life. You never know what to expect whenever you have a child, but you know they are a gift. I want to thank God for my very special gift. I want to thank First Steps for helping my husband and I go through what we have been through with our child. He is now in preschool. He is doing very well and is keeping up with his peers for the time being. I know that if we hadn't had the First Steps program he would not be where he is today.

We had a TERRIBLE time with service coordination until the last few months. Only one service coordinator seemed willing to do anything to help. The others didn't call, visit or respond to calls that I made to them.

Not aware of First Steps until a friend referred us. The program was great for my son. The transition into ECSE was wonderful for him. His issues (speech and language) has increased tremendously, which makes us happy. His frustration level has decreased to almost nothing. Without the in-home therapy our son would not be where he is today! Thank you!

This organization is awesome. The therapists are great! I know our child and our family would not be at the level we are at now if we didn't go through First Steps. I thank God, the government and the community, for providing us with such special hard working, knowledgeable, caring people as our coordinator and therapists. My husband and I felt comfortable throughout the program and learned so much. We were very comfortable with the transition to the next level of services. Please don't do away with these services.

I thought the First Steps program was wonderful. But there were a few areas needing improvement. My service coordinator never returned my calls and eventually dropped our case without letting me know. I found out through someone else. And the speech therapist cancelled more than she came. Nevertheless, my son showed great improvement.

It was the absolute best thing ever that could have happened to our son.

Q5: Not enough therapists...cancelled special services co-op Windsor

It has been a while since we received First Steps services. I really have mixed feelings as it has really helped our son's speech problems. I tried the special co-op Windsor and they really made receiving services DIFFICULT! They only had one therapist available to us and she was very hard to schedule because she was "booked up." I had to cancel and use ONLY the HEAD START program which I think has helped my son TREMENDOUSLY! Thank you.

First Steps 0-3 program is INVALUABLE! We moved to St. Louis specifically to participate in Missouri's highly reputable First Steps program. We were assigned an incredibly knowledgeable service coordinator, who was and is always timely and professional as well as genuine and understanding. Though there seemed to be a great deal of paperwork, rules and regulations and other formalities, service commenced promptly. We were connected with outstanding service providers who remain friends, supporters and resources. Governor Matt Blunt is ludicrous to even suggest disposing of this program as doing so would be a significant detriment to the many, many children with disabilities (and their families) that will follow in the years to come.

It is an excellent program. I have had four of my children involved in it. Just a great program!

I think that anyone who works with First Steps should have children of their own. That way they will know just what people go through all the time. No one should ever say they know what people go through if they do not have kids. If you don't have kids, then how would they know.

We had to remove my grandson shortly after he was introduced to it because the doctors wanted to get him stabilized after putting him on the ketogenic diet in October 2003, shortly after he began seeing therapists. When they first started coming for therapy he was experiencing a lot of seizures of all kinds so it was difficult to do anything but just hold him and comfort him through the seizure episodes which were very frequent, usually just minutes apart. In my opinion it is a very good program.

The First Steps program, counselors, speech therapists, and service coordinators have all been a huge help for my family's well being and for my son's ability to overcome his speech delay. I'm very grateful for all of the time and help we received, especially my son's speech therapist. She understood his needs, addressed them and helped him learn how to communicate with friends and family.

Question #1: I didn't know about it until our Parent As Teacher Educator told us about the program.

It is an excellent program. I do think it is difficult to expect the parents to be able to choose the appropriate therapist (in one case, a speech therapist), when we know little about these things. It was kind of like throwing a dart at a dartboard. Other than that, it was an excellent program for us.

First Steps had such a wonderful impact on our family. I would hate to see an end to it. I think the people are overworked and understaffed.

I hope First Steps continues in Missouri. I can't imagine going through the first few years of my child's life and the challenges we faced without the assistance of First Steps. Families need this program. Thank you so much for this program and all the good that it does.

While it took three plus months from the time we filled out paperwork until a service coordinator contacted us, when we did start therapy it was wonderful. We were able to find a way to reach my child and teach her to speak by breaking down each word and giving her verbal cues on how to move her mouth/tongue. She still has a lot of difficulty with this but without the training from our therapists, our daughter would be a much different child. Before she was only saying "dada" and now she has about 80 plus words in her vocabulary. She was diagnosed with PDD but the training we received was invaluable. I truly hope this program continues for families like ours who desperately needed help!

First Steps has made a HUGE difference in our son's life. He has a very unique diagnoses and First Steps was very helpful in addressing his needs and plan for his continued development.

I believe the First Steps program is essential in giving our young children the head start they need before they are eligible for services through the school districts. I believe the program helped my child be a more active participant in social settings and at home. I hope that First Steps continues to provide these necessary benefits to Missouri's children.

If it wasn't for the First Steps program, I would have not known that there was help out there for families with a disabled child. We stuck together because of First Steps. My family felt comfortable with these programs. They make you feel like we are all family and are there for one another. We all need these programs like First Steps. My child believes in First Steps and so does the family.

The First Steps changed our lives and my son's life. He would not have gotten the comprehensive services had it not been for this program. Thank you so much.

I have been very pleased with the services my son has received through the First Steps program. I was amazed at how they let you know exactly what was going on with the case and how they really paid attention to your concerns.

I have two children with special needs and one attended the First Steps program. Both attended Early Childhood Special Education Services (one is attending it right now). If it wasn't for these services, I don't know where we would be right now. Both First Steps and ECSEs have bought out so much in both of my children that I am amazed with the progress they make everyday! If it wasn't for these services, I would be afraid for me and my children. God bless these service and the providers for their services!

Thanks to First Steps, my child is learning speech. If it wasn't for First Steps, my child would not be where he is today on his language skills. Thank you to Parents as Teachers for letting me know about First Steps.

I feel that Governor Blunt needs to stop messing with the First Steps program. It really helped my child and me. I'm a single mother of a son with developmental delays, and if it wasn't for the First Steps program, I'd be totally lost. It also helped my son to get used to school surroundings, before he started Pre K-Preschool. My son loves school and when school isn't in session for some reason, he gets really upset. But I use the techniques that First Steps showed me and we have fun like we're in school. I've recommended the First Steps program to a lot of parent's I've met.

This is an important program and we were very grateful for the help to our daughter and our family!

I am pleased with the First Steps program. I was told from First Steps that the school district would continue my child's therapy but the school district did not. The school district said my child was too smart for ECSE. My child is needing therapy in his gross and motor skills and occupation. I think First Steps program needs to be kept.

Question 1: Once I convinced them my child needed to be evaluated it was easy, but I had to fight to get there.

Question 16: If not for First Steps, I don't think my son would be in therapy now.

First Steps gave our son confidence and started him on the road to a normal childhood. Without it, I don't think we would have caught his problems yet and they would be even harder to overcome later. First Steps helped him begin to speak, jump and learn to play like other kids.

The First Steps program was very beneficial to my family. The only complaint I have is that our county had a difficult time keeping speech therapists, so my son went nine months without speech therapy.

Excellent program that helped our child. Our son NOT need to receive any services after his experience with First Steps.

I had no problem with the First Steps program in general. I think this is a very useful and necessary program. I did not agree with how my child's speech/language skills were tested when he was two years old. I thought that my area coordinator (the coordinator that got the First Steps process started) was an excellent source of information. My service coordinator, however never returned phone calls promptly and sounded immature while giving information.

Our child received physical therapy and speech during her time with First Steps. Without the First Steps program our daughter would not have gotten as far as she has, nor would she be eligible for the special education program she is currently enrolled. We can only hope that the First Steps program will be around to benefit other families, the way that it has benefited ours.

First Steps was vital in bringing our family together to discover we could raise a child with special needs. Without their help I would have been lost and scared. Our child is a happy three-year-old due to the assistance of First Steps.

I am a mother of two autistic children in which only my youngest participated in First Steps. I didn't even know about First Steps until the nurse practitioner at our pediatrician's office (who I rarely saw) told me about it. Even though I have been a member of Parents as Teachers since my oldest child was around 18 months, she never told me about First Steps or the fact that she saw some red flags with my son. My experience with First Steps was wonderful. My son received speech and occupational therapy from a mother and daughter team. From the start she was very respectful and honest with me about my son's condition. She was not hard or cold about it and very supportive. My son made a lot of progress. Both women did their job well, and worked with him from the heart. They wanted him to improve and came to care for him as much as he cared for them. I will always be thankful to them for what they have done with my son. I feel that the First Steps program is priceless to families and their special children. My only regret is that my oldest son was not in the program and I often wonder how much farther he would be today if he had been in the program. As you may know with Autism early intervention is so important. So I pray that the First Steps program will not be taken away from families in Missouri. Also, every physician in Missouri should know about First Steps so more families in need can benefit from this program. From a blessed mother of two autistic boys.



First Steps was literally a "life saver" for our little boy and our family. The issues, disorders, and diseases our son has (Autism and Epilepsy) are not gone, but thanks to the early and intense intervention of much needed therapies through First Steps (and Missouri straight Medicaid) our little boy is not gone either. We are so thankful that our child got the specialized, early and intensive intervention he needs. My husband works at Children's Mercy and has a good job and insurance. My son's grandma is a CMH social worker. I am an informed and passionate advocate for my son. We have a loving network of church members, family and friends to help us and our children. Even with all of those blessings our boy would NEVER have made it to where he is without the programs Missouri has to care for, assist and educate disabled children. Missouri First Steps is a VITAL step in helping our children become all they were meant to be! P.S. We voted for Gov. Holden and are faithful that he and his policies will continue to protect, teach and provide for our special needs children in this great state. NO Child Left Behind-NOT ONE! Thank you and God bless.

We are grateful for the First Steps program and the treatment, therapy and medical devices and technology it has helped to provide. We may have seen so many lost months, perhaps years, in getting our child the services he needed immediately. Every child with a disability should have this same opportunity. It is a NECESSITY OF LIFE! Thank you.

The state should look into other ways to fund for education. EDUCATION is one of the important steps in a child's life. Without education, you have nothing! The state should not cut the funds or budget for First Steps. The state needs to look into other ways to fund the Parents As Teachers program after the age of three and up to the age of five. Signed, A concerned parent of a child in ECSE and in elementary education.

The program was vital to our son's progress. He progressed to the point of not qualifying for school-age services.

First Steps was great for my daughter. ECSE was a big joke and that's why we pulled her out! Nobody there cared about helping my daughter. I wish I could go back to the in-home therapy First Steps provides. That worked wonders on her! One of my daughter's areas of delay is social...being away from Mom is her biggest fear. ECSE just expected her to "be normal and get over it," when they know "normal" is what she is lacking. It was just a huge slap in the face. So, now my daughter is stuck with these delays and no one to help her! It's really sad and not fair to her!

First Steps and the professionals I met through the program made an INCREDIBLE improvement to our family's life! Great program.

All of the providers were just wonderful. We (including our child) were very sad to have the services terminate when she turned three.

I think First Steps is a fabulous program. I see many, many children in my son's preschool that have greatly benefited from First Steps. My only complaint was and is that our speech and occupational therapists were frequently late and canceled often and the time was not made up. I know that the program was not charged for their time but I felt that my son qualified for a certain number of hours a week and he was not always getting the time. I know that we could have changed therapists but our window with First Steps was very small so I did not want to lose any additional time. I hope that someone will be able to monitor the therapists a little more closely because I don't think the state or the children are getting their monies worth when it comes to certain therapists. However, I signed the SAVE FIRST STEPS petition and hope the program continues.

Please continue the First Steps program! Our son's teachers were knowledgeable, caring, supportive and an awesome beginning to our little boy's development. We highly recommend the program. We would have felt very lost without all the help. It makes us very concerned and upset that the program could be taken away from children and the families.

I hope the things on line seven all get cut! It ALL is a waste of my tax money!

We were greatly saddened to hear that the First Steps program is in jeopardy of being shut down. I can't express enough how the program has helped our son to achieve "normalcy" in his life. We will definitely be outspoken advocates to keep this program up and running.

Question 4: This was not the coordinator's fault. The process is just very long and tedious. That being said, it was well worth the effort as our son's speech has improved significantly.

Question 3: Addressing transition, our son was only part of First Steps for a short period of time so the six months doesn't apply. Our service coordinator at First Steps did a wonderful job for our family. She was thorough and extremely easy to work with. We were blessed to have her working with us. Our son's speech pathologist is a wonderfully gifted, kind-hearted lady who truly bonded with our son. With her help he has made incredible progress and is able to express himself more effectively. Thanks for the work you do!

I brought my son's problem to my pediatrician and to Parents As Teachers. Parents As Teachers gave me a number to contact the people from First Steps. It took almost three months to respond to my repeated calls. They had trouble finding an available therapist to do the evaluation. After the evaluation, they had thirty days to find a therapist to start services. They couldn't find a speech therapist come to my area, instead my son got referred to a developmental therapist. By the time we got the ball rolling with First Steps, it was time for a transition meeting with ECSE. However, if it hadn't been for the three months of therapy my son received, I wouldn't have felt comfortable sending him to ECSE preschool. My son is now making wonderful progress and meeting IEP goals.

Both of my children received services from First Steps and are doing well. They would both be considerably behind had they not received these services.

Question 7: Ended at Age 3 (Parents As Teachers)

Governor Blunt did not know what he was doing. I hope future changes are not made so hastily. Children should be entitled to all the help they can get whether their parents can afford it or not. They are the future we will be depending on and we need to help them be strong. First Steps helped me step back, take a breath, and think "WOW, we can really get through this and everything will be alright."

Parents As Teachers was worthless in assisting my children and family. In fact, I found out about First Steps through my son's orthopedic surgeon. I had been involved in Parents As Teachers for a year by then and all they could say is "yes, he's somewhat delayed."

We got in really late knowing nothing about the program. I found out about it by accident. Before then, I had never heard of it. My child was only in it two or three months before his third birthday and we had a lot of problems. The main one being the specialist never showed up.

Our daughter has made, and continues to make, incredible progress. Without the early intervention and help from First Steps, our daughter wouldn't be where she is today. We cannot say enough about the wonderful experience we have had with the First Steps program.

My son needed much more speech with his speech therapist. Due to his small number of minutes in his IFSP, the ECSE group who developed his IEP gave us few speech minutes within the classroom. There is a direct correlation between what they were given and what will be done in the future, even if it was inadequate in amount. That is frustrating. I also believe that our "SPOE" was so swamped with paperwork that our desires or needs went unanswered for quite some time. The first priority of a service coordinator should be the families they serve, not the piles of paperwork that are, for the most part, unnecessary. Case in point - there is so much paperwork being sent out that our own family doctor who has been signing all the documents is truly tired of signing multiple documents that are trivial. If the Governor is looking at saving money in the First Steps program, I suggest he cut out the need for three quarters of the paperwork, therefore making the service coordinator's time better spent and cutting hours of meaningless paper pushing.

First Steps provided speech therapy for my son. My insurance would not have covered this and I would not have been able to afford it. Our son went from two words at 18 months to being advanced now for his age in his sounds and words. In fact, he has a huge vocabulary that amazes us everyday. Myself and others are now able to understand him. I cannot imagine where he would be developmentally without First Steps. I hope and pray that Governor Blunt does not eliminate funding for First Steps. I would be happy to share my son's success with him if he needs a better understanding of the program.

I would like if he was able to be tested. He is doing really well right now. I want to thank everyone who had helped me and my son with all of his needs.

We have not received any services through First Steps since our daughter's first year. We filled out one of these surveys after we were discharged. This survey is not applicable for us this year.

Our daughter was born at 26 weeks and needed occupational and developmental therapy. I believe without First Steps she would not be as attentive and thriving in pre-school.

The program should be expanded to include ages through kindergarten. First Steps is a much better program than what is available through the school district. Without First Steps, my child would not have developed to the point he is now. We were very pleased and grateful for all the help received from First Steps. THANK YOU!

The state needs to do what it can to support programs like First Steps. Early intervention is always best. We know we have a long road ahead of us but knowing we gave our daughter the best help we could through therapies with First Steps, we know she will and has benefited from the help she received early.

I really hope First Steps will continue to help families that have children with disabilities. First Steps has helped my oldest who is eight years old now and my youngest who is three years old. Her speech wouldn't have improved without First Steps and our local school district.

Our lives would have been much different without the help and direction of First Steps. This is a wonderful service for children who might not otherwise get the developmental needs they must have in order to thrive and eventually become independent. Thanks to our wonderful providers we were also able to identify other developmental delays too. The faster we can "close the gap" and transition our daughter to a typically developing classroom of kids the better. Once in First Steps, my concerns were finally validated and I was able to learn how to help my child effectively. Our therapists were outstanding. They are very professional and I will forever be thankful to them and the First Steps program. We must keep this program for the future of our children! The kids and families you help truly need the help more than anyone. Thank you.

The First Steps program was a good program. My son enjoyed it.

It is invaluable to families who have a child with a disability. Early intervention helped our whole family. Gov. Blunt needs to keep First Steps for all families to get an appropriate jump in life.

Need to reimburse the providers quicker.

We had a great transition moving from Illinois to First Steps in Missouri. We are very grateful for the great assistance that was given. Thank you very much. It was money well spent.

Before First Steps we could not communicate with our son and after receiving the speech therapy he needed he has already made a huge improvement! We cannot be thankful enough for the availability of this program. Without it I do not know where our son would be in his developmental delay!

First Steps was a great program for our son. We saw progress and were quickly able to communicate better. The First Steps coordinator communicated with us all the time regarding testing, services available, and next steps to take in his development. It was important to us as parents to set attainable goals for our son and First Steps did that. It was encouraging to see all of the goals achieved.

My son no longer receives services from First Steps, but when he was, I was very happy with the services and the people we worked with. Thank you.

Need to reimburse providers quicker.

My son was diagnosed with Dysphagia (swallowing disorder) and Dyspraxia of speech. Before First Steps, he could not talk and communicate with us. We felt very fortunate to have the help and therapy we received.

First Steps is a wonderful program that lets the parents work with providers and be a large part of the decisions that are made to best suit the needs of their children. Special Education is awful. The parents thoughts and wishes for their child are heard but not acted upon. The IEP team treats you whichever way they want and do not take the child's best interest in hand. They provide only what they have to provide; not what they should provide. I have only liked my first year in Special Education because of the Senate Bill that allowed my child to stay with a Part C provider. I fear next year that my child will show regression from being placed into an unfamiliar environment when he should stay where he is at. But, the decision will not be mine as his mother and that's really unfair to him.

First Steps was incredible. I don't know where my daughter's development would be now if it wasn't for First Steps. My coordinator was the best. She was very helpful, answered all my questions, and tried to help us in anyway that she could. With First Steps' help I am confident that my daughter will be on task for kindergarten. Please save First Steps for other children!

If it wasn't for First Steps, I am not sure if I would have known how to help my daughter and get her in the school program. It is absolutely wonderful.

First Steps helped our child with his disability and to transition to Special Education smoothly. I'm not sure that we would have found out how to get into Special Education without First Steps.

I was extremely happy with all of the services provided, most especially the therapists. It weren't for this program, our daughter would not be at the level she is now. She is still developmentally delayed, but the strides she made were fabulous. This program helped our family learn to work with and better understand a special needs child. Thank you so much.

A good program concept, but there is room for improvement and changes that would benefit families and save the state money.

The service coordinator should be better trained to evaluate services needed. Perhaps service providers themselves should also perform service coordination tasks.

First Steps not only financially helped us but helped us to receive all the services our child needed and we are very thankful.

I believe we would have benefited if we had been referred earlier to the program.

In the beginning we had trouble getting First Steps started - lots of miscommunication. A lot of unreturned phone calls. After services started and we began working with our therapists, things were better. We just don't feel that our child's condition improved with services from First Steps. He has improved tremendously since attending the school for therapy. If we were referred to First Steps again, we would probably not choose to use them. Thanks for your time.

The only set back we encountered was finding a physical therapist in our area. There just don't seem to be enough to go around. But, overall, the program was wonderful. We did finally get one and my son is doing great. All of the therapists he had were so good with him and I know that since we started him so young he now has a better chance at a normal life. The therapists were great about showing me how to do specific things with my child to increase his development. I believe it is important that all people involved in a special needs child's life should be on the same page. It is important for parents to help do their part and for the therapist to encourage and show the parents things to do to help their child. I believe First Steps is a vital part of development for special needs children. Parents are not educated on how to raise and care for these special children. Through First Steps, parents can be educated by the therapist to provide the best chance for their child. I hope First Steps stays around for other children. I feel I was very lucky to have had the experience with First Steps. The therapists taught me a lot and together we would come up with a plan to increase my child's developmental skills. My son has Downs Syndrome and is very high functioning and I thank God that he was given First Steps to help him. Without First Steps and other early intervention programs, children will not have the chance they need to reach their potential. I just want to say again, thank you First Steps for all you have done for my child and my family.

The special education service, First Steps has really been a big help to our family by showing other ways to communicate.

Although we have health insurance, if it were not for First Steps and the therapy through the school district, we would be financially stressed and I do not believe my son would have made the exceptional progress that he has.

First Steps is a wonderful program! This is my second child to receive services. We could not have done it without First Steps. Thank you.

I truly believe that First Steps was exactly what our son needed. When he first started he had absolutely no vocabulary and communication was extremely hard for him and for us. We noticed great improvements within the first week! He was only in First Steps for six months before he turned 3, and within that time he really blossomed. And I know it was because of the wonderful therapists he had. They gave us some great/helpful ideas on how to work with our son. I can't describe how incredible it is to have our son be able to talk and communicate with us now. I can't thank First Steps enough for giving time, knowledge and patience. My family is truly blessed because of it. Thank you!

We learned about First Steps from the hospital NICU when our son was born prematurely and diagnosed with ACC. This was critical, as I do not know where we would have heard about it later. The therapists that came to our house made a point to learn about ACC if they hadn't worked with it before. I think only the occupational therapist had. Having triplets, it was also very nice having the services performed at our home. It may have not been possible otherwise. By watching the therapists, we gained a lot of insights on how to help with our sons' development that we wouldn't have known otherwise. I wish our service coordinator was more involved. I had to initiate most of the changes by calling her including learning about the transition to the preschool. To hold the periodic review meetings were too formal and too far apart. I would rather have had more frequent phone contacts. I also think these meetings (and the preparation for them) was time that the service providers got paid that wasn't necessary. Any changes that were needed to the service had already been discussed during a regular appointment and could easily be approved or disapproved with just a phone call. Generally, I really believe the First Steps program was a big help to our sons and our family. The people involved were friendly and seemed to genuinely care about our sons' progress. I do think there is room for improvement in the administration of it.

First Steps is absolutely necessary for families and their children that have developmental needs. If this program is eliminated, many children will suffer the consequences. Please help to ensure that this program remains for those many children that need it. I feel extremely lucky that my children were able to reap the great benefits of the First Steps program.

Please make sure to support this wonderful program. My insurance would not have paid for the services my child needed, and were recommended by Children's Hospital.

Our service coordinator did VERY little. She charged two minute phone calls as "meetings." Our service provider (speech therapist) was wonderful.

First Steps was a critical part of our child's development. We are truly grateful for this program and wouldn't be where we are today if it weren't for early intervention. I know I am only one voice but we will advocate for keeping First Steps in the States budget. We received occupational, physical and speech therapy, adaptive equipment (stroller and stander) and many other items - (bath chair, ball & switches) which have given our son more confidence and independence in every day activities as well as make it easier for mobility for us. First Steps must be kept important for it affects Missouri's future! These kids deserve every opportunity to make a difference in everyone's lives!

We had a wonderful First Steps experience and I can't imagine where my child would be developmentally now without the help we received. I hope this program is ALWAYS in existence for families that have special needs.

First Steps was a blessing for our child as he lagged in development due to a visual impairment. The only issue we initially had was a slow response from an intake coordinator. The loss of the First Steps program would be tragic. Improvement and enhancement would be great for families like ours. Anything else would send a political message that our state legislators and government do not understand the savings and results that early intervention adds up too.

This is a great program and is vital to my child's development! Thank you everyone.

We are currently paying everything out of pocket because the ECSE in our district would not work with us. We filed a state complaint and the school was found in compliance. We are currently in the process of moving to Nixa, MO in order to give our son the education he needs to teach him with Autism. First Steps was invaluable to us and our child's progress. Insurance doesn't cover anything related to Autism and we were able to make tremendous progress with our son in a little over a year. We are currently private paying our First Steps providers because of their wonderful ability with our son. First Steps was absolutely invaluable and should not be cut!

Although our child has no disability (physically, emotionally or mentally), I was greatly appreciative of the services provided due to a premature delivery. I pray this service is never taken away.

If it was not for the First Steps program, we would not have been able to afford all the services that my child received and private insurance does not cover even DAFO's and hardly any physical or occupational therapy time but yet we make too much to qualify for anything else. My child is doing wonderful and I thank the First Steps program for helping keep up the great job. Our coordinator was excellent and always willing to answer questions or help any way she could. Thank you.

Please continue First Steps. It greatly helped our child with his speech needs and he is now doing so well with his speech/language skills. Early intervention was key to his success.

First Steps was a wonderful program for our child who did beautifully with her therapies and improved by leaps and bounds. We are most thankful for the services you provide and hope Governor Blunt is unsuccessful in trying to end the program. That would be most grievous if there was no First Steps program.

I would like to say that I don't know where I would be right now if First Steps was not around. They are the ones that have helped me and my family. My son is so much better off today because of First Steps.

Without First Steps our son would not be where he is today. We owe everything to First Steps. Governor Blunt, please continue funding First Steps.



The first step program is wonderful and has helped us work and learn about our child with disabilities. Since leaving First Steps, we have been extremely disappointed. The special education program through the school has been a let down for us. When we had concerns we were not listened to and the therapists we have are not qualified for a child with multiple disabilities. They didn't even have equipment in the classroom for our child. Nothing to position him in or any cause and effect toys (since he is blind). We voiced our concerns to one of the coordinators, she didn't listen or help in any way. This is so frustrating because we had a wonderful experience with First Steps. First Steps was the best thing that happened to our family. We learned a lot of skills to help our child and help us voice our opinion concerning his rights.

The First Steps program was a wonderful program. Our son is doing so well, and we believe that we have to give most of the credit to the therapists that were given to us through the First Steps program. We wouldn't of been able to afford all the services, even with health insurance. Our health insurance we have is through the state and as of right now, I think they only allow you to have six or eight visits. That would have given our son two weeks worth of therapy and if that would be the case, he wouldn't be doing as well as he is. He now attends the Special Learning Center thanks to our school district.

My child made good progress while in First Steps and I was allowed to help make choices for her. We have not been that successful with ECSE. I often wish this process was more like First Steps.

I love the fact that the therapists were able to come to our home to work with our child. It was very convenient especially because our child does not like to wait for appointments. Everyone we worked with was very professional and helpful. That took a lot of stress off of our family. Thank you

First Steps is a wonderful program and has provided our son with exceptional services to assist in improving his speech and language. We couldn't be more pleased with the services he has received.

We are very appreciative of the services provided through First Steps. All individuals were knowledgeable and sensitive of our needs.

By the time I learned about First Steps our child was almost at the age where they exit First Steps. We only saw our case manager two times and the two ladies who tested him.

I felt that my family greatly benefited from this program and I would recommend it highly.

Shouldn't be shut down! Good resource for early intervention to prevent long term problems as in our case. Preemie baby got help and today is a normal three-year-old.

Biggest problem is Point of Entry. Not enough people were doing this efficiently. Overall, we were very satisfied.

Q13: They all made an effort to learn all they could about it on their own and with information I provided them.

We are so grateful for all the help we've gotten through First Steps. Because of my son's high muscle tone, tactile defensiveness, and all his delays, he did (and still does) require physical, occupational and speech therapy. Because of all his therapy and doctor appointments, I was forced to quit working. Without First Steps, we would not have been able to afford the therapy he needed. I can't think of anything I would change about the program. All his therapists not only worked well with him one-on-one, but gave us a lot of good advice and things for us to do with him from day to day to help him. He's shown significant improvement in all areas, and we're very thankful!

It's not the First Steps program that is the problem. They were great. It is the school system that we are having to deal with that is the major problem. Our service coordinator has been great in helping the family in all ways possible to deal with the horrible situations at the school.

Q7: We were in until she turned three years old.

To put it mildly, I was appalled that Governor Blunt would consider putting First Steps on the chopping block. My first grader is now off of an IEP due to the extraordinary efforts of First Steps and her therapists. My son will be four in April and has made tremendous strides as a direct result of First Steps. Both children have Galactosemia, a disorder that causes language and speech delays, learning disabilities, fine motor and sensory problems. I believe both of them will grow up to be contributing, tax paying citizens and will more than repay any debt the state of Missouri might owe as a result of their disorder. This "first step" toward a better future not only helps my family, but all of Missouri. Thank you.

Q4: Our Parents As Teachers teacher told us about it.

Q6: It took a long time to receive services and we were not always getting called back.

After we had our child evaluated, the process took some time. The coordinator set up a meeting with us and the initial evaluation. I was never asked separately what I wanted for my child and when I was asked if I wanted this provider's services in front of that provider, I felt like I had to say yes. I think my child would have had better First Steps instruction at KECC, or at another child development center. I am skeptical somewhat of the individual providers. My child's therapy in First Steps was adequate, although compared to what he receives now there is no comparison. The coordinators efforts were minimal. I had few returned phone calls and I felt lucky to have anyone call me back at all. When I was offered services at the "set up" meeting with both the therapist and coordinator, I was just grateful to have any services. I felt something was better than nothing. The "coordinator bills" I was sent copies of, I had no idea what they were for. I think First Steps needs to do a lot of work to get out the "red tape" and rid high fee administration costs. It is time consuming and I'm not sure they are even working hard at all. The parents ought to choose whomever they want as a therapist instead of choosing names off a website list. I hope my comments have been helpful. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but I think some improvements could be made.

I cannot say enough wonderful things about our speech therapist who worked with our son. In a word, "priceless!" She was caring, focused, motivated, sincere and very genuine. We miss her! Our son is in special services with the school district now. It's okay, but we miss her.

They have helped my child in talking more clearly and just talking all together.

Our son was ten weeks premature and we met with our First Steps coordinator when he came home from the NICU, but he never needed any additional therapy or services. We appreciated that the option was available to us though.

I feel First Steps helped us to get our loving child back. My son does not have severe disabilities. He has sensory integration problems and fine motor delay. Our insurance would not have covered any treatment. My son's fine motor skills have caught up to age appropriate and we have all learned how to deal with and handle the sensory issues. We would have been lost without First Steps.

Our service coordinator was very helpful and easy to get in touch with. My child received services quickly. The whole process went very smoothly. Please let me know if there is any way I can help support the future of this program.

A transition meeting is currently being scheduled. The initial process of getting evaluations and developing the IFSP was not completely clear. I was also unclear of the role of the service coordinator. I had minimal contact with the service coordinator and was unsure of the coordinator/parent role. Overall, I do not think my child would be where he is today without the services he received as part of the First Steps program.

First Steps is a great program. Without them my child wouldn't be where she is today. First Steps provided us with a speech therapist. We could not afford this. I will be forever grateful for First Steps. They led me step by step through each phase. They made sure I understood everything. If I didn't understand, they would explain everything to me again. Any problems that I had they fixed as soon as possible. Without this program my daughter wouldn't have been able to have help until she turned three. Early intervention is the best way to help children with special needs. Thank you so very much for letting my daughter and I be a part of this program.

The only negative aspect of the First Steps program were our service coordinators. They were hard to reach at times and didn't supply us with all the information we needed. Also, in acquiring my son's last set of braces before his third birthday, I had to do a lot of leg work when the process was being held up due to a computer problem. There was a lot of "passing the buck" with the service coordinator, etc. BUT everything else has been awesome.

I think First Steps is a great program. Both of my children qualified for speech. They both received the help they needed to catch up with other children their age. Thanks for all of your help.

I really hope that cuts will not be made to this program. I have seen such an improvement in our son's language. Before First Steps, our son said maybe six words. Now he talks nonstop and we love it. The therapists that came into our home were so professional and caring to his needs and helped us as a family to help our son. Every step we had to take they showed us and gave us the tools we needed as a family. Words or actions could not show the program how our family is so grateful for everyone's help with our son. Without the help we don't know where we would be now. Thank you.

I appreciate all the support we received through this program. Our speech therapist was wonderful to work with. I will continue to support this program. Each time our new Governor Matt Blunt wants to make cuts to this program, I'll voice my opinion! I also wish I knew of this program earlier in my son's life. We were told by our doctor that he was speech delayed, but we didn't know of this program until a neighbor referred me to it.

Question 4: It was easy to learn about First Steps? NO. I found out about First Steps by a miracle of my God! My son was receiving speech therapy thirty-five minutes away for a thirty minute session (after everything was said and done, only 20 minutes) twice a week. I began looking for something closer, which led to four or five calls to places that said, "Well, try this number. They might know of therapy somewhere." What frustration. The rest of question four was so easy for us. I appreciated it. After being in First Steps only three weeks, we had his first breakthrough with speech. And, because our speech therapist had some knowledge in other areas, he was evaluated for physical therapy and now, one year later, our son's problems are more under control and he is very loving. Thank you for sending us this survey! What an awesome program.

Our son is apraxic and was diagnosed as such through our First Steps speech language pathologist. If not for First Steps, we wouldn't have been knowledgeable enough to help our son. We were directed to an Apraxia Children's Network that also gave us information and led to a support group. Thank you First Steps! He continues to make wonderful progress through the ECSE program, but we believe that success is building on the success of First Steps. Please save First Steps for other families!

First Steps is a very good program that needs to stay in progress. For a program that we initially were not aware of, it has helped me and my family. I give high praise to the First Steps program. Keep the program going.

First Steps helped our family and our special child a great deal. We need more programs like this to help us with our ongoing needs. First Steps is great!

It is an excellent program that will help better the chance of young children to become productive adults in the state of Missouri.

I believe that the area that our family had the most trouble with was getting hold of our service coordinator. I do thank God though for First Steps and the services that they provided for my daughter, that otherwise we could not afford!

First Steps is an excellent program. I don't know what we would have done without it. I hope our government officials (Matt Blunt) can show us how important our children are to them by keeping First Steps available to all. Everyone I met at First Steps was extremely well educated and helpful.

First Steps has done a great job with helping my daughter. She has developed in areas that I thought would take her a long time to get her where she needed to be. I really do appreciate all the help and needs the First Steps program has helped us with. All the staff has done a great job with working with us. I really do appreciate it.

I did not know about First Steps until my Parents As Teachers told me about it.

The service coordinator provided little or no help. She rarely attended the meetings and provided no information or help with my son's transition out of First Steps. She was very difficult to contact and usually a myriad of personal crisis' prevented her from helping our child or family. Our physical therapist and occupational therapist are outstanding professional caregivers who truly helped our child and our family. A number of early intervention providers helped us in so many ways, we are most grateful.

Without the help of First Steps, we don't know where our child would be. This program gave him the intervention he needed. Our speech provider and service coordinator were not always easy to reach or were not always helpful, but our developmental and occupational therapists were wonderful. Overall, this program was extremely beneficial to my son. Our child has an Autism disorder. He now talks and participates in social activities. First Steps is an invaluable program to our family.

Our therapist was very helpful with me and my son even though we didn't have very much time with her. I wished that there would have been better information out to the public about the First Steps program! I would have had my son in A LOT sooner than I did!

The therapists felt like our son was up to his age level in development, so they quit before his third birthday. We feel his development has been quite normal lately, and don't feel we need extra community services that are available.

My husband and I are very pleased that such a wonderful program as First Steps exists. We've talked with others that agree. How could anyone not support such a dedicated program for children. Anyone with any LIFE EXPERIENCE knows how special children are and how important it is to do whatever is necessary to aide in their growth and development.

I love the First Steps program. Before First Steps we were not able to communicate with our son. Toward the end of our First Steps program, we had a therapist come to our home two nights a week. She was great with our son. After each session she gave us an update on his progression. She also gave us information on things to practice with him at home. My son did not use IFSP because of the county we live in and the school our son attends. My son is doing so well that he was screened last week and scored above his age range. It all started with First Steps. Thanks from a grateful mom.

I am very grateful for the First Steps program. Our child has a speech and fine motor delay. Without this program I am unsure of how he would have progressed. Our child had speech therapy and fine motor skills therapy every week. We were able to communicate with Our child a lot better through this therapy and his tantrums became controllable. I was finally able to communicate with my child. This has also helped Our child to transition into other programs. He is currently enrolled and attending Head Start in Savannah where he continues seeing a speech therapist. First Steps gave me the tools I needed to be a better parent and I would hate to see that taken away from the children that really need it.

Early intervention programs like First Steps are vital in assisting children with special needs to reach their full potential. Without the help of First Steps, I don't believe our son would be thriving and reaching his development milestones. At the age of two our son was basically non-verbal. Now at the age of three and six months, he is fully communicating and catching up with his peers in language and other areas of development.

I am really glad that my son was able to receive the help from First Steps. I know for a fact that if my son had not received this help he would not be as far as he is today. There was nothing I could have done on my own.

Our experience with First Steps was a good one with the therapists that we had. Our service coordinator was extremely incompetent but because of that I am now a service coordinator for First Steps and feel that I do a very good job because I know how I would not want to be treated because of our experience.

First Steps was a great move for us. Our daughter's only problem is her speech. She did have problems with new people in transition, but is much better with this. She does receive speech therapy in Kentucky through Head Start and is doing very well.

My son was not able to do anything a full term child could do and the people at CP Center helped us significantly. I appreciate everything you guys do. Thanks.

The First Steps program helped us with our son and his speech problems. We were very impressed with how organized and knowledgeable the women were that we worked with. They were truly appreciated. I was, however, very disappointed after the transition out of First Steps into the care of the school district. Even though our son's speech was definitely helped and was no longer qualified for help through the school system, the schools communication with us was not there. Our caseworker and I had to make a lot of unnecessary phone calls to finally figure out that we were no longer qualified. Their communication with our speech therapist was not good either.

I think it is a great program. It helped our girls get the help they needed but couldn't afford.

Just now assessing Question #7 under Experiences after leaving First Steps.

First Steps was the conduit we needed to get to where we are now. Had it not been for the therapy my son received last summer we would not be as advanced as we are today. Our speech therapist "unlocked the vault" that my son was living in and helped him learn how to think about appropriate speech, talking and motor-neuron connections.

When my daughter started her speech therapy with First Steps, she said, "uh" for everything. We had a speech therapist work with her twice a week. When she exited, she was using the correct sounds for words and knew some basic sign language. This program made a huge difference for us. We never could have afforded to have a speech therapist in our home without it; plus the added advantage of having someone available when we were available.

My foster son came into care at almost two years old with 50% developmental delays across the board. First Steps was a much needed and appreciated resource in helping to deal with his many special needs. Therapists were able to help give me strategies for managing his SI disorder and loan equipment so I could follow through with therapies on a daily basis. With the help of First Steps therapists he has made remarkable progress. It would have devastating consequences if it were cut from the state budget. SHAME ON OUR GOVERNOR!

The process of getting into the First Steps program was very lengthy and drawn out. We started before he was two (1 yr and 8 months) and didn't start to get services for another four to five months. So by then, we were even talking about transitioning at three when we had just started. The process to get on board needs to be faster so precious time isn't wasted. I loved our therapist and feel it was definitely worth it. This is a program worth fighting for! Keep First Steps!

My child was first evaluated in October of 2003 at 25 months of age for speech and language delays. Her speech score was at a nine month level, but her comprehension was on target. Because of this, she was declined services. Six months later, the speech therapist called back to see if there had been any improvements. There had not. She turned in another evaluation and finally had it approved. By this time, my child was drastically behind peers her own age and for weekly services, it was too little too late. Since the transition, my child has been receiving services four days a week and has made remarkable progress in her speech and language development. She almost enjoys playing with peers her own age now too. I just think it's a shame that help had to be delayed at all.

I listed six and seven for ECC. You people need to have a talk with the principal because I do not agree with her action when it comes to my child's care. You DON'T put your hands on my child and try to rip her out of her mother's hand when told to let go. She wouldn't so she MADE her. Don't know the lady's name but I don't appreciate the comments that were made plus being threatened by the police for looking out for my child. You WILL respect what I say there will be no spanking or jerking on my children because if it ever happened again, I will take legal actions against the school and that person. I will not have my girls treated bad or abused by anyone. Basically, what I am saying is there will be no corporal punishment accepted at all. That is very illegal and I will punish anyone that does anything to my girls like smacking them or jerking on their arms, paddling, etc. This will not be acceptable.

We moved to Missouri from Washington when our child was one and a half years old. It was hard to connect to First Steps. After we were connected we had excellent experiences inside the program. Our service coordinator was being promoted at the time of his transition, so the transition did not go well. I did not like my new service coordinator and did not call her for help. My child did not have a communication system in place by the time he turned three. I wonder if he fell through the cracks on that issue? Overall, I was very pleased with First Steps and was grateful that the services were available. We would not have been able to afford the services on our own or know which services to have sought out.

I'm grateful for the services provided to our family by First Steps. Thanks.

Don't know what we would do, or had done without First Steps. Wonderful program.

We are currently getting speech and hearing services through the MOOG Center for Deaf Education. Physical and occupational services are being provided by the early childhood program in our local school district.

Awesome program. I don't know what we would have done without it.

First Steps was crucial to our three-year-old learning to talk (he has Apraxia). At two and a half he could not talk at all and now at three and a half he is almost appropriate for his age. Our daughter (a year and a half old) has the same speech concerns. With the continued help of First Steps, we are confident she will have the same success as our son. Our hope is our son will no longer need speech by kindergarten. Our daughter, if First Steps is continued, may even be phased out by three or four. This program is so very important to our children's social and emotional well being. Not being able to communicate hinders any possibility of friendship or self-confidence.

The First Steps program is great. It would create a disservice and a disadvantage to many young children with disabilities if eliminated.

They don't do a good job. Half the time my service coordinator or child's therapist didn't know how to handle her disabilities and she didn't respect confidentiality.

I hope, in the future, the service coordinators are monitored more carefully. We were in the program for nearly two years and my service coordinator did NOT contact me ONCE. I found out towards the end of our program time, that she was indeed, supposed to play a role in this process and she was being PAID for it. This angered me that she took advantage of my son and our family, and it was a disappointment towards the program itself. I was very confused throughout the whole program and did not have any way to obtain information.

Q5: Explained in a way that teachers or others with experience in the area understood.

Q6: My Service coordinator did NOT do her job AT ALL as a result, I was shifted from one to another at the very end of the program.

Q7: I received information and very brief explanations.

Q9: She never returned calls.

Q10: She never returned calls.

Q11: Going through the program was a learning process, I was unlucky because I had a lousy service coordinator who was not there for us to help us through this.

Q16: Off the charts agree with this statement!

Midsection/Pg 3 Q1: This was an area I was VERY confused with. As I said before, our service coordinator really let us down. I hope this position will be monitored more closely in the future to prevent another event like I had.

First Steps is a great program that served as an informational stepping stone for our family. After completing the qualifying process and reviewing a potential IEP for our child, we decided to go a different route by utilizing a one-on-one speech therapy treatment through a private organization. Socialization skills with peers is achieved through our local preschool. Thank you for all the time and we feel our child has excelled with our chosen path.

If it wasn't for the Missouri First Steps program and receiving a jump start on our son's speech problem, we would still be unable to understand him. They catered to our son's needs and made a huge improvement with him. Since starting First Steps and then going through ECSE our son has went from only being able to say five words that we were able to understand to what he is able to speak today. Being able to carry on more conversations and even telling US stories is wonderful. This is just a big heartfelt thank you in the improvement in one child and family that you have helped. This program was and still is a life saver for several families. Once again, thank you for giving our little son a chance to be able to communicate. Thank you.

First Steps is vital to the success, growth and development of children birth to three years. Our family, especially my son, has made progress with help and early intervention. Without a program such as First Steps our youth would be deprived of so many developmental milestones.

My son's speech/language pathologist was instrumental in helping him to be able to speak with us (his parents) and others in a meaningful way. I firmly believe that without the interventions received through the First Steps program, my son would have been three years of age and still unable to express himself and interact with others verbally. The positive impact of the program on my son's life is ultimately immeasurable but also undeniable.

Overall, I was very pleased with our experience with First Steps. My child stopped First Steps in September (physical therapy). In August we had a speech evaluation. She was behind but did not qualify for services. Now at twenty six months she is testing at eighteen months and she still doesn't qualify. This is frustrating since other states require only a 25% delay. I feel a 50% delay for qualification is a injustice to a child.

We hope that the Governor does not cancel First Steps, as do many other parents.

I must share that the speech, developmental and occupational therapists changed our lives in First Steps. These three ladies helped my son immensely with his diagnosis of PDD. Without First Steps, I don't know where my son and our family would be today. Because of First Steps, my son and I were able to attend the three week Parent Training program and my husband and I came out feeling so powerful and full of knowledge. I now do sessions at home with my son every day. I thank God for the First Steps program everyday. Thank you for your time.

It's a great help to know that First Steps and Parents As Teachers are there to help one way or another. Thanks for the help of my child.

Without the early intervention provided to my son through the First Steps program, doctors and therapists, as well as ourselves, realize he would not have recovered so much brain function. With my son's type of brain injury (skull fracture and bleed resulting in oxygen deprivation) we have been told early intervention was the only way to recover most brain function. He is walking, talking and even reading a little because of this early intervention. SAVE FIRST STEPS! PLEASE!

We are grateful for the services provided through First Steps and feel they were beneficial. The paperwork seemed excessive at times, particularly all the things that were sent by mail. I know a lot of it was disclosures required by law, but it seemed like too much. Everyone we dealt with was professional and very helpful.

We would like to thank the First Steps program for all the help they gave to our child and family. We had never heard of the program, but once a need was recognized by our Parents As Teachers person and we were referred to First Steps things really changed. We are so blessed for the early intervention this program provided for our child. Our caseworkers were GREAT! They helped our son and our family so much. With their help we closed all the gaps in areas of delayed development and other issues that were prevalent in our child. We now have a child that qualifies for NO services and no one would ever suspect any previous delays. I cannot imagine where we would be without the help we have received. Thank you!

Getting started was tricky. I believe we were trying to begin when there was a big change in the program in the way coordination was handled. Once we started, things went well.

We were familiar with First Steps with our first child. We really appreciate all the help and information available through this program. I didn't know if we would be where we are at in assisting our son to develop appropriately without First Steps. We are a little apprehensive about the transition, but since he's not even two yet, we will get to it when it comes. Thanks!

Because we had a very good case manager who was very familiar with our child's condition, we had great support. We had great difficulty finding providers who would come to our home even before the more recent budget problems. For a child with a suppressed immune system and on a vent, this was crucial. My complaint about the school program has to do with their guidelines for services. For a child who neither walks nor talks (but is making progress toward both) they were not wanting to give much in the way of therapy - one hour per week speech and 30 minutes a week of physical therapy - on that, he would not have made it to where he is now.

I want to thank all of the therapists that helped our child.

Switching service coordinators as often as we got switched, really confused us. We got good service but the timely manner was slowed due to the switching.

I had a wonderful experience with First Steps. We just suffered a little disappointment once we reached our school districts services. I wish they were as good! Thank you



Getting into First Steps took awhile due to case overload and not enough coordinators. We had multiple problems with physical therapy due to unreliability, and therapists quitting the company. I got fed up and searched for another therapist in another company. The service coordinator was not thorough in his explanation of services beyond First Steps after my son turned three and did not mention other available resources, i.e. respite care, which I learned about from a social worker that I happened to meet. I felt that some of the therapists treated their sessions with my son like "hurry up and let's get this done so I can move on to the next kid" rather than taking the time to really work with him. I think, over all, the experience was beneficial as I learned from the therapists and incorporated much of their functions into my daily routines to help my son develop better. I think the program was more of a teaching tool for me than a learning tool for him.

First Steps was such a blessing to our family. The early intervention is so important and made a huge difference in my son's development. The therapists were professional and knew what they were doing. Overall, I was very satisfied with First Steps and grateful for their services. The only few things I was disappointed in was: 1) I had to push for the Behavior Therapy my child needed. There services were inadequate to begin with and I had to make my own roadmap. They did end up providing the services though. 2) Therapists seemed to cut the sessions short-sometimes just 2-5 minutes short, but that adds up over time. After I mentioned it to them-it improved.

Overall, we were very happy and appreciative with our experience with First Steps. Our son has developed leaps and bounds!

We loved our First Steps providers. They were knowledgeable and so helpful and related great with our family.

Our service coordinator was excellent, very pleasant to meet with. I loved all of our child's therapists, the physical therapist usually ran late, sometimes didn't show up, but when she was here I couldn't ask to have anyone that loved our child more than she did. Our special instruction person was so informative and excellent for my child & me both! I really miss all of them and our child still remembers them! Thanks so much

The First Steps program helped my child grow tremendously. It is a wonderful program. I am afraid to think of where we would be today without it. Thanks.

I am having a very difficult time finding Daycare.

We found out about First Steps through the NICU at St. Johns. We are very grateful for the program and only have the highest compliments for First Steps.

We had a relatively short period of time with First Steps but during this time there was turnover within the program which caused a small amount of problems in getting appropriate information.

We had my son tested through First Steps back in November 2005 when he turned 2. We didn't qualify. The I paid \$200.00 for St. Johns to test him and through the results of that test, First Steps qualified him in April. So now he is in the program and I'm thankful and we are finally seeing some improvements. But I am aggravated that the services didn't start when he was 2. I wonder how much further ahead he would be if they would have. I also wonder where he would be if I hadn't taken the matter into my own hands and paid the money and went elsewhere for further and more detailed testing? It's just something for First Steps to think about. I feel sorry for the people that aren't qualified and don't have the resources for further testing. I am positive children that need these services are slipping through the cracks. My child was almost one of those children.

I thought the services (speech/language) we received through First Steps were better than what the school district gives.

I thought the speech therapy services we received through First Steps were better than what we now receive from the school district.

Regarding Page 2, Question 12: Not the fault of First Steps, but rather one of the service providers who was seldom available and did not return phone calls. The other service providers (from the same company) were ALWAYS available.

At first I was not pleased with First Steps because it seemed that as soon as I got to know the service coordinator they would quit or change responsibilities. I was very pleased after we got connected with another service coordinator. She was always available and easy to contact.

The only complaint I have about the First Steps program is that we had a hard time finding someone to come out to our house and work with my child. We live in a rural area and went through three people before someone would accept responsibility to come on a continuous basis. Once we had found someone she was great! I was worried at first after the coordinator came to our house that we would not be able to find a teacher. I had some teachers that made appointments and canceled at the last minute. After finding a teacher, I had a great experience with the program.

I just know they were great and don't know what things would be like if he didn't get any help.

Our service coordinator was fabulous!

First Steps program has helped us a lot. Thank you!

The early intervention through First Steps brought my son's speech capabilities up to speed. Through First Steps we were able to address his speech delay before it began to adversely affect many other areas of his development. Our therapist was wonderful and all of the First Steps contacts were very professional, clear and efficient. I am a large supporter of First Steps and strongly encourage the relevant politicians and administrators to keep the program up, running and as expansive as possible. I firmly believe that money expended for services at this young age certainly saves greater amounts of money in the future.

First Steps is a great program but you need to get the word out. Had I known about it earlier my child would have benefited more. (My Parents As Teachers person should have told me about it sooner). I learned of First Steps from my neighbor who has a child with Downs. I thank her for telling me about the program. The communication with First Steps was good. That communication DECLINED when my child started the ECSE system.

Our speech therapist was absolutely wonderful. She made a world of difference in my son and how we spoke with him. Thank you!

The bureaucratic paperwork seems unnecessary and time consuming and resource consuming. The service coordinator position is a middle man position and is not necessary to the process of getting these kids their services, as is the parent/program liaison who only called to verify a meeting time when the re-evaluation time came around. I just think your money is better spent on maintaining services and quality teachers than on sending people around to summarize what the parents and teachers and therapists have agreed upon. For example the monthly "statements" the therapists "billed time" on it.... Comparable to an EOB. What a waste of valuable dollars.

I would like to have seen the school do more assessments on my child when transitioning. For example, I believe my child is in need of occupational therapy but the school will not do an assessment. I was very pleased with the services my child received through First Steps.

Only wish pediatricians were more aware of First Step's wonderful services as another parent informed us.



While my child was in First Steps, our first case manager did not want our child to get services that he needed stating it was too early. That was resolved when the case manager was changed. Now that my child is in the school system at my initial IEP, I, as a parent, was made to feel that I was asking too much. It is very hard to hear from other parents that if I was in a different area I would not have a problem obtaining the services that my child needs. All school systems should be the same. My child is in the school system, and at six months in, I am calling for another IEP to try and obtain the services my child needs. We have already been through one teacher who apparently did not care about teaching special needs children. His consistency in therapists has not happened which calls my attention to the question of the consistency in what is being worked on. It should not be so hard to obtain services for a special needs child. I would be willing to talk openly.

Great program for both children. But the school district was too slow in transition and didn't get enough services for her or our son.

I am an educator myself, and have found this program to be an excellent early intervention program. I was at a loss at what to do for my child. First Steps guided me and carefully explained the issues and possible solutions. The only suggestion I would make is letting more parents know about this program. I know the benefit of early childhood education but there are many families who do not know about it and the benefits.

Participating in the Missouri First Steps program was a good experience for us as well as our child. I believe she really progressed with the help of her therapists and Parents as Teachers.

First Steps provided the necessary eyeglasses our child required which greatly assisted our family financially. The speech pathologist, that worked with our child is certainly an asset to your program. He was very caring, organized and knowledgeable. My son bonded immediately with him.

The speech therapist was extremely loved by my son at the end of their year together. He really "took" to her, making learning better!

Our coordinator was severely out of touch with my son's progress. At our initial meeting with the Early Childhood Development staff at our local school district, she had no clue about what he and his speech therapist had been working on. She didn't know that we had decided to work on another area that he needed more help with. Speech therapist was excellent. The speech coordinator was horribly uninvolved. I was very happy with the speech therapists, but very unhappy with our coordinator.

I believe Parents as Teachers was crucial in noticing delays in the beginning before my son turned two. Early intervention (from age 2-3) with First Steps was so extraordinary in my son's development. Although he qualified for special services for his first year of preschool, he probably won't qualify for his fourth birthday. I owe that progress primarily to his speech/occupational therapists during First Steps.

By watching the therapists work with our child, I am more able to work with and understand our child. The therapy sessions were very educational to me - I learned how to play with our child and make it a positive learning experience.

My only complaint is that my child could not receive all of her services in the home because of lack of therapists who would be willing to travel to give my child therapy. My understanding is that therapists are no longer paid mileage yet under First Steps, a parent can get mileage reimbursement for taking child to a therapist? It is frustrating and would have made my life a lot easier, as well as my child's, had she just been able to receive ALL therapies in the home and therapist's that had to travel more than thirty miles to see her should get reimbursed! I just don't understand why it is set up this way.

My biggest complaint had to do with the lack of urgency I experienced with First Steps after I sent in our paperwork. We received the name of our first contact person and were told she would contact us within two weeks. We never heard from her and I left multiple messages! I started the paperwork in February yet we did not get services until late June. Our son missed out on four months of services because of her incompetence. Once we had our first meeting, things finally moved. Our therapists and service coordinator were great. It was the first person we had to work with who was not helpful. She kept complaining about being understaffed and it took her a month or more to return our initial call. I work at a university with physical therapy and occupational therapy professors. Thankfully, they helped me work the system.

Parents As Teachers referred me to First Steps. My coordinator was great! Our therapists were awesome! The transition to ECSE was smooth. Our Special Ed teachers and therapists are superb! First Steps is a great program!

The only problem we had was that my child did not receive speech every week because there was no one available so he received less than he needed for awhile till I called around to find someone myself. It would have been helpful to have a list of available therapists.

Most questions would be answered differently for our first service coordinator.

First Steps saved us. When we started First Steps, our daughter couldn't crawl or walk. Through weekly physical therapy she gained these skills and in a year was declared on schedule - she still is not where most of her friends are but she's on track with developmental charts, and she can keep up with her friends to play. I don't know where she would be without it. Through First Steps we also took advantage of speech therapy as our daughter is deaf in one ear. She had a slight speech delay but with the therapy, she actually is beyond other kids her age now in speech and language skills. The therapist worked with her but primarily gave me the knowledge I needed to help her. As we worked with therapists, they noted some issues that we thought were just personality. An occupational therapy evaluation determined the issues are actually a sensory integration problem. This has saved us a lot of arguments and frustration. Without First Steps, our family would not have been able to afford therapy for our daughter. Even if our insurance would have covered the therapy, there is a \$25 co pay per visit and this would have been financially crippling to us, even to just have one therapist per week. First Steps gave my daughter the jump start she needed and I'm confident that because of what we've gained, she'll be a success.

We are very thankful for the First Steps program. I don't know what we would have done without this program. Our 26 week premature twins are doing great now and I don't think they would be doing so well had we not had this program. Our therapists were wonderful and guided us and told us what we needed for our children to catch up in the development. Otherwise, we would have no way of knowing what they needed. I hope everyone in the future needing this service can have the same opportunity as we did.

This was an excellent program. I don't have one single complaint and am forever grateful for the First Steps program.

First Steps was excellent at identifying my child's disability (speech) and allowing us to continue services with the speech therapist who discovered his lack of speech. We could have done without a service coordinator. She was not helpful or informative. First Steps is a worthwhile program which should not be stopped.

Finding occupational and physical therapy services in rural areas are just impossible. This area needs help greatly. Also, finding transportation to and from services also.

1. When creating the IFSP, the service coordinator just asked "What do I want?" or something similar. It would have been more helpful to get information about what he needed and then determine how this would work with the family. I am not an expert in child development. 2. We received services in four areas: The third area was great and the fourth was okay. If we would have been in First Steps longer, I would have made a change. 3. It would have been helpful to know about DMH Regional Center. I have just now completed the paperwork for services we are eligible for.

I am thankful for the information provided to me that allowed me to contact First Steps. This information was provided by my son's doctor. Plus, the services my son received during his time in First Steps was excellent and made major changes that would affect my son the rest of his life. I am happy that the Governor realized that this program is essential to provide assistance to children with special needs. I hope the program stays around long-term and my son is proof that the program is very effective!

I have nothing but praise and admiration for our case worker. She was awesome. The First Steps program has always been wonderful to my three children, that benefited from your program. I don't know where I'd be without you. I only wish these services continued after the age of three. We have moved to a different school district and I'm finding their early childhood program is not very good. My son, whose three and a half, has had a major speech loss and is not adapting to their program very well. I MISS FIRST STEPS!

During meetings facilitators use terminology not familiar to parent. It would be beneficial at IEP meetings to have definitions for areas being addressed (i.e. adaptation skills). Also, sometimes in meetings it seems very focused on the "procedure" and paperwork and not addressing the child's needs. Overall, I have been extremely pleased with both programs.

Our child was a foster child that moved from Newton County when he was two years and 4 months old. We didn't know he was in First Steps at that time. We were told that his records were lost in the system. It seemed since he was so close to turning three no one wanted to work with him.

My daughter had a significant speech delay and received speech therapy through First Steps. The service coordinator, while helpful, seemed to me to be an additional step I had to go through to talk to the people I needed to talk to. Speech therapy did not seem to help my daughter much. I found a product called ProEFA, an essential fatty acid supplement that helped her much more. She has taken the supplement for six months now and is almost caught up to her age group. If the state would like to save money, research could be funded to study this product and maybe substitute essential fatty acid supplementation versus speech therapy. Call me a kook, but instead of paying out hundreds of dollars per month for service coordinators and speech therapy, you could pay about \$7.00 per month for supplements.

Hi. I opted to get my daughter's speech therapy through another provider, so I had very brief contact with First Steps. I DID have one BIG problem with my experience however. I told my worker I was no longer interested in First Steps, but she continued to call and asked if I needed services and then she billed the state \$60.00 for each of the calls. When I objected, she said, "Oh, don't worry-you don't have to pay". WOW. What a cavalier attitude towards taxpayers money. I sure felt like she was looking up excuses to file bills. Is this the policy of First Steps? It certainly has left a very bad taste in my mouth regarding your agency.

I would like more information regarding First Steps and a list of other organizations that are provided to help my son's development so he can improve better.

My family thanks Missouri First Steps for all they provided for my little boy. He would not be doing as well as he is if it wasn't for early intervention. Although he is autistic, epileptic and is developmentally delayed, the early therapies he received I know helped him a great deal. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Our First Step coordinator was outstanding at all times in meeting and exceeding our families needs. She always recommended excellent therapists and as a result we had a very strong team working with our daughter and supporting us in our IEP going into ECSE. We have missed her since our transition!

I believe with the help of First Steps services and our service coordinator my son would not be where he is today. The programs and opportunities made available helped us and him reach his potential.

My child was part of the First Steps program before all the changes took place in 2005. We don't know how the services are under the First Steps Program. The reasons I scored the people who worked with my child lower was because I didn't agree that some individuals and organizations were working for the best interest of our child. This forced us to move in order to get the proper education for our child.

We were made aware but did not use services.

Thank you for all you've done for our son. There are no words to describe! Thank you.

Our daughter was speech delayed. The First Steps program got us the speech therapy we needed to get her caught up before she starts school (kindergarten). We are so pleased and appreciate the First Steps program.

When our son was diagnosed with a visual impairment, we were devastated. We soon learned how normal our lives could be and that he would do fine because of the people who helped us through First Steps. We always felt like we had people we could go to with concerns and were so thankful for the therapists that worked with our son. Our service coordinator helped us get special glasses which have helped him feel more confident and increased his vision. We can truly say that we feel blessed by God for giving us a little boy with special needs. Because of First Steps we had a strong knowledge base and support from the beginning. Our son is now in preschool and is doing better than we could have imagined. Thank you so much for all you do for Missouri families!

The First Steps program is a wonderful program. I feel that it has made a huge impact on my child's growth and learning ability. We went through a lot of therapists and service coordinators but everyone was very helpful. We learned a lot from each and every one. I am forever grateful for the First Steps program. THANK YOU for a program such as this one.

My child was found to be 49% delayed. He definitely had a life-long disability. When we were finally able to get into the developmental ped (six month visit) he was given the "official" diagnosis and then started receiving four services through First Steps. We private paid for one services while waiting the six months. I heard that a therapist and one service coordinator can make a clinical judgment on kids so close to cut off. Maybe there should be a policy about something like this.

First Steps is outstanding! I have personally spoke with Governor Blunt and my friends who are State Senators and representatives. I have spoke and met with area First Steps/Cooper County Sheltered Services. I have talked to the Boone Hospital providers about discontinuing services. My son has received excellent care and is developing well. Both of my children were born at 27 weeks and without First Steps would not have developed as well. My daughter was not as delayed. Not only is the care excellent, our service coordinator and therapists are wonderful with him. They truly care about him and want him to succeed. We are sad to have our daughter leave because she has been with him since he was born and in the hospital. I am very concerned about services not being available through Boone because of cutbacks and they are losing money. I know they have a business to run but these are innocent children who NEED First Steps. Thank you!

We were very pleased with our therapist and coordinator. We remain in touch with each of them and feel they were a very important part of our child's first years of development. It was also a blessing to not have to worry about payments on therapy with so many other doctor bills during that time. It would sadden me to think that in the future families may not have the same luxuries as we did with First Steps. For us, it was well ran and awesome.

I strongly believe that a hearing test should be required for children with speech issues before speech/language assessment.

Thanks for all the help with our child.

Thank you! You've made a huge difference in our family!

Our service coordinator and her supervisor were terrible to work with. The ladies who came to our home and worked with our child were the best thing that ever happened to our family.

First Steps has made a huge impact on my daughter's life. She would not be as ambulatory as she is without the services provided by First Steps. It is such a godsend for our family and others. Thank you.

I believe, overall, First Steps saved our son and family. I am forever grateful to our coordinator and his ABA therapist. They truly changed our lives for the better. However, the other therapist I worked with DID NOT have a clue and in some cases did more harm than good.

We are grateful for the help of First Steps.

I strongly feel what Governor Blunt has done to this program is a horrible thing. So many children need these services that do not get them. It has been proven to start helping our children prior to school age increases the "chances" for normality. Blunt has destroyed First Steps and it is a crying shame. He should look around at other states and see what they are doing. I was one of the lucky ones and got out before Blunt destroyed it! It was a wonderful program. I never thanked my therapists enough for what they did for us. Top Notch therapists!

Because of First Steps we believe our son is doing well and learning to cope with his disability and work through it instead of letting it hold him back. Without the early intervention and intense therapy he received, we believe he would be delayed a lot more than he is. We greatly appreciate all the services we received.

I am so glad that my child qualified for speech. It greatly enhanced his abilities and put him up to where he needs to be.

Our child was initially assessed by First Steps at age two. The only assessment completed was speech. Our child did not qualify as his/her delay was only 30%. Our child started individual speech therapy and two months later, group speech therapy to address possible verbal apraxia. The individual and group speech therapist believed there was something besides apraxia affecting our child. So at age two years and four months we took him/her to a neurologist, who diagnosed our child with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This, as I have been told by many professional therapists, should have been caught at his/her two year First Steps evaluation. Although I am very thankful for the services our child is now receiving, I believe a failure to do a complete assessment resulted in our child losing five months of services he/she needed. As you are aware, ASD is best treated the earlier it is diagnosed and treatment begins. Our child being "put in the box" of being only speech delayed prevented him/her from getting very necessary services. Diagnoses do not fit into neat boxes and neither did our child. I hope your evaluation process will improve so not other child loses out on that precious time. A concerned parent.

I already knew about most of the resources.

First Steps was a great help. We thank you and I'm sorry I was late getting this in the mail back to you.

Early intervention is extremely beneficial to children and their families in dealing with a deficiency. So much development can be encouraged with the right knowledge and activity. My child's needs were being met initially, and improvements were made each week, then my coordinator decided we did not need as much services, and then her improvements diminished significantly. I also saw my child could benefit from services outside the home and my coordinator Jenny Suda (spelling?) was adamant that it was not a First Steps service possibility. I was frustrated with my coordinator because I felt she did not want to see my child continue to improve with services provided by First Steps. My child continues to receive physical therapy on a weekly basis and is making progress, but is still behind. I understand funding is limited, but Jenny was willing to approve weekly in-home visits again and I thought St. John's physical therapy program was a better motivator and a better fit for my child. Jenny would not agree because she said that was First Steps policy now (in-home only). The cost for in-home and facility care were about the same. Actually, St. John's physical therapy program was less (\$50 versus \$60/hr). Overall, I think it was a tremendous advantage to have First Steps services for my child, but the program could use more supportive coordinators and or a more flexible policy. P. S. I decided not to file a complaint because this occurred over the last nine months of her service and I had spoke with Jenny's supervisor who was difficult to work with as well.

If it wasn't for First Steps, my child would be in a wheelchair. She has Cerebral Palsy, AC1 Malformation, Spinal Bifida, Autism. She walks and now is trying to talk. Thank God for First Steps. Her brother has the same issues and is doing very well.

We had a good experience with First Steps overall except; the service coordinator was very nice but hard to get a hold of at times. She was a little forgetful when it came time for my child to go to the school district and transfer. She forgot that I told her I wanted to meet at a certain date with the school district (to get started). If I had not called the school district asking if we had an appointment with them, we would have missed our deadline because she forgot to tell them the date I wanted to meet with them. She claims she did not talk to me about it, I know she forgot because I wrote it on my calendar. She was very nice, but a little flakey.

In speaking with other families of preemies, we were not informed of any assistance from SSI or other services, other than the regional center. I think that families with special needs children are financially strapped as it is and any help would have made a much bigger difference to us. Thank God, our child did not require any extra special items or assistance or we would have been bankrupt.

#13: One of the people who worked with my child was fantastic. The other was not very helpful because she was always ready to leave before she got started.

Pg. 3, #1: I didn't even realize we were not going to need services anymore until we were told by the speech therapist.

Comments: Thank you very much for all of the speech services. The speech therapist is fabulous and we would not have been as successful without her. We miss her.

We found out almost too late about First Steps. Our daughter was already two and a half before she was enrolled. All the available services were not explained to me. Our service coordinator was very unorganized and self-absorbed. Our therapists were more help than she was. We were late enrolling her into the school district. But, the actual services we did receive greatly helped my daughter develop as she should have. She is now reaching her age level of development. I give credit to First Steps and their assistance in my education of my daughters needs.

I am currently a special education teacher and that is the way we found out about First Steps. I am the one who had to call and initiate the transition to the school district at age three.

Thank you very much!

I appreciated having a service coordinator who was very familiar with our child's disability. She was able to make helpful suggestions/recommendations.

Thank you!

Our experience was hindered due to changing coordinators often. Up until it was time to transition out of First Steps, most experiences were positive. Sometimes we weren't sure who we were dealing with or if there even was someone. The one thing that has made most of my answers negative was not being transitioned into an ECSE program. I have had to use several other services to help us with much tension and red tape so to speak. My son should have begun preschool in August or September but by late October, we are still awaiting evaluations. I have had to use Head Start and their advocates, an advocate from Jefferson City, local Parents As Teachers and a psychologist, all with many hours of phone calls and information requests. I hope our case is an isolated one as I do believe the program is a benefit when done right.

Could you help me find help for my son? He still needs speech therapy. I wish I could get someone to help him. He speaks better in some words, but others you have to guess what he is saying. Plus, he started stuttering really bad. This program helped me a lot. Thank you.

The services provided by the First Steps program were quite effective for our daughter. My only concern involves my daughter's initial evaluation for First Steps at nine months of age. She was denied. At the time she was at least 25% delayed. She was evaluated again at 18 months and found to be 25% delayed in some areas and close to 50% delayed in other areas. She was accepted at this juncture but was only able to take advantage of the program for six months. Considering how useful the program would be, I was very disappointed that our child was not able to take advantage of 27 months worth of services. The quality of the services provided and the people my wife and I worked with who were able to assist our daughter in closing the gap in her development delays were outstanding. They were truly wonderful people to work with. The state of Missouri failed our family, specifically my daughter, in turning her down for services when she was originally evaluated in November 2001.

It was not until the end of our time with First Steps that we were told exactly what our situation with our daughter was. Despite the recommendations of our pediatrician, ophthalmologists, Children's Center for the Visually Impaired, I feel that First Steps and our school district failed us and turned us away. This after telling me they had a visual specialist. This person never spoke to me or saw my daughter. However, First Steps could do nothing to help me because she had already turned three. I feel like the system failed my daughter.

I only wish you went to kindergarten age. The transition to preschool was rough.

Our child excelled in his speech development since starting First Steps. We were very happy with the speech therapist. It is a wonderful service.

Our First Steps speech therapist did nothing to improve her speech.

The therapists we had in the First Steps program were wonderful. Our child seemed to have lost a lot of his momentum after he turned three and was no longer in that program. I feel that the program should be extended to age four. The children that it helps are behind so therefore need a longer period of this specialized help. It was a big blow when the Jefferson Co. Developmental Services school closed because of funding cuts. But the daycare at Jefferson College qualified for your program and they were great. But after he turned three they dropped him. I wanted him to stay there but they didn't even ask and then they were full.

The First Steps program was the greatest gift to our family. We had been struggling so much, yet did not realize the magnitude of our son's delays and disabilities and how these were impeding his development. My only complaint with First Steps was that it took four months for us to get through the intake process to begin receiving services. I do not want the Governor to take away or change this program at the expense of these children who so desperately need help. I will gladly accept a tax increase if it means giving these children the support they need. First Steps has been a life saver!

It is my opinion, that the strict April 1st deadline, or magical date, needs to be revisited and decided on an individual basis depending on many issues. These issues being how well the child is progressing with the First Steps therapist; how much he/she will be seen by a therapist in the school district and; input from the child's parents. My son, with a moderate speech delay, was making great gains with the First Steps therapist. However, just when therapy was going well, we had to switch to the school district's therapist because his birthday was March 27th - not April 2nd. No matter how much extra help he received at home, his progress stalled and even regressed. As a kindergarten teacher, I consider myself well-educated and "in the loop" with little ones, however, I am not a speech pathologist, and we missed ours when we had to stop. Please think about hearing appeals from parents on an individual basis when it is close to the April 1st date!

He also has occupational therapy. He is not receiving physical therapy anymore but I hope that he can get it in the future. Thank you

We didn't get to work with First Steps very long before our son turned three, but the few months we did, I felt very grateful. They were a great team of girls and they worked on getting us involved with speech and occupational therapist and all the evaluations, which helped get our son into the community school for the help he needs. Thanks so much.

I have a child with Autism and the speech/language pathologists and occupational therapists were not making any progress until we started ABA. All speech/language pathologists and occupational therapists should be trained in ABA in order to help children with Autism. It is ridiculous how long it takes for a provider to be paid through First Steps. I've seen it take as long as eight months to be reimbursed for services provided.

One problem we faced with First Steps was during the transition period. There was a huge misunderstanding between us and our service coordinator about sending our son to a catholic school and still being able to receive services. We both misunderstood each other. A friend of mine, a speech therapist in another district, explained the options to me. At that time my son was already three years old and First Steps services had stopped. I did contact our service coordinator and explained the problem. She apologized and was wonderful in getting us quickly transitioned into the special school district. We are thrilled with the services we are receiving now. The only other issue we had was with our speech therapist. She was nice and worked well with our son but it seemed she was always calling and canceling. I realize these services were free, but I felt we missed a lot of valuable therapy time.

The First Steps program was wonderful and now that we are involved in the ECSE, I realize how much more "user friendly" First Steps was. I loved that the services from First Steps were in our home. Our speech therapist was excellent! The process of transitioning to ECSE-specifically the testing-was difficult and did not seem to be focused on making it comfortable for my child. Those doing it were obviously overworked and stressed. Our experience with First Steps was much more positive than our current situation with ECSE.

Question 6: Some were good and some were bad. I had several service coordinators. They kept switching me to new people due to people quitting, etc.

Question 10: Some were horrible! I waited a long time to get new services needed!

Question 13: Some good, some clueless.

It's a wonderful program that really helped my son catch up on his development.

I loved our coordinator and all the therapists.

We are very appreciative and thankful for the financial support we received through First Steps as our daughter participated in physical therapy.



We found the program to be very helpful and beneficial to our child. My service coordinator was always available for questions and made the process very easy. We felt guilty at first because the program was free, but we were very glad it was available. As a first time parent, it was a great resource to turn too. Thank you for providing this service.

Our child was a foster child and no longer lives with us but the speech therapy he received from First Steps has helped him tremendously.

Everyone was great! Thank you for everything.

The only difficulty we experienced was with the billing of services through Boone Hospital and First Steps. There seemed to be a communication problem between the two. It took a while to sort it out. Otherwise, I am an extreme advocate of this service and would be willing to defend it's necessity and survival to anyone. Our regional coordinator was always available and exceptionally knowledgeable and supportive.

Very wasteful. Too many watchdogs.

At the time of the transition meeting, I thought my child would no longer need services after age three. At age three, when it became apparent she would need those services, I was not able to get them. I was told to call and leave messages with various people and now my child no longer receives therapy, even though she needs it.

We are starting with the school district in January. Too early to rank the program. However, I don't know what we would have done without First Steps. My child has come a long way with therapies provided by First Steps. Thanks aren't enough.

The initial intake coordinator and the services providers were exceptional and caring. The services coordinator was really not needed by our family. Other than the initial meeting to establish the plan and sign numerous files, her only involvement was quarterly phone calls to see if we were okay.

Very happy. I wish there were more resources for families that make more money but not enough to self pay. No real resources for average to low income levels.

For my son First Steps has been an excellent program. For my daughter however, she fell through the cracks of the system, but is now receiving services through the School District.

My child was seen at Children's Mercy at birth, (craniofacial clinic and developmental pediatrician) however, never once did anyone there communicate the First Steps program to me. I eventually learned of the program when my child was six months old and I was still seeking help for my child's issues and I contacted KU Medical Center/Autism Center. They directed me to First Steps and I will be forever grateful.

Thanks to First Steps. We would have missed a lot without it!

Thanks again!

Keep it going!

I found my First Steps service coordinator to be very friendly. She scheduled appointments and attended to our needs. However, I don't think First Steps benefited my particular child. She experienced seizures at birth but fortunately hasn't had any episodes since. Also, I am a school counselor with a graduate degree. I've trained to help students with needs such as my daughter. Additionally, I have three Parents As Teachers in my family and an ECSE teacher in my family. So, my daughter is one of the lucky children who is surrounded by people who can help her in a variety of ways. Thanks for your help!

First Steps has helped my daughter enjoy life to her fullest potential. Without this service, I do not know where we would be! Thank you to all involved.

I want to say thank you to our service provider. She helped us out a lot.

We received speech therapy. Our child is not, however, disabled.

We really appreciated having our therapist come and work with our son. He still asked about her sometimes. Thanks for everything.

#3 on page 3: This was attempted, but the school district did not comply.

First Steps is a wonderful program. My son is not age appropriate, yet is not but two standard deviations away from the norm (1.75). It is sad when we have worked so hard to make the strides we have and now the school system needs a number rather than the goal of helping him become age appropriate. So now we sit and wait for regression and we will try to get help when he is four.

Please keep the program.

I wasn't for sure my child would walk but with the confidence of the physical therapist, she assured me she would walk like a normal child. We had a lot of catching up to do since my child was in casts for eighteen months due to club feet and several surgeries.

She also loved aqua therapy. She didn't realize she was getting "a workout"; she was just having fun. First Steps had great ideas to help us improve her walking. When at physical aqua therapy, she would say it was her playtime. The therapist came to play every week at our house. I still keep in touch with the therapist. Thank you so much. My child has beautiful feet and runs faster than lightning. She's making up for lost time.

First Steps was very beneficial for our son. The services and support we received was outstanding.

The worker responsible for seeing my son came only once. When I tried to end the First Steps program, I continued to receive the "bills" as if he were still enrolled. I asked numerous times for them to take my son out of the program. They're claiming that my son was still in the program for funding purposes was both shady and wrong.

Our speech therapist was wonderful! My child made great improvements working with her and she worked our schedule so well. Thank you so much!

I just want to say that our service coordinator and a friend has been a great help. She really shows wonderful compassion and goes to extremes to make sure our daughter is getting the care she needs. I really appreciate her so much.

I especially liked the freedom of choosing my own therapists. I did have to change therapists once. More flexibility in remaining in First Steps after the third birthday would be nice. My daughter turned three on March 17 and so had to go on to ECSE for the last two months and then minimal time in "summer school." Perhaps the kindergarten cut off could be used to send them to ECSE? I feel that she would have made more progress during the last six months had she been able to stay in First Steps. She has actually regressed in gross motor skills.

#4 & #5: Our school district does not offer speech therapy at her daycare, therefore, I am unable to use the districts speech services!

Outstanding service!

Our coordinator was very knowledgeable and proactive. She did a great job and really helped our family! We are grateful for First Step's help. We went through early intervention in Texas with our deaf son, and it was not nearly as positive an experience.



Our child is continuing to attend a private school for hearing impaired children. I do feel our district will be very helpful when the time comes.

My child does not receive as good a quality of therapies with the school system as she received through First Steps. The help she received through First Steps and Children's TLC was much more thorough with more hours of therapy.

I think they took my son out of the special education program and I think my son might still need some of these services. One thing that I can say he wants to learn. He still stutters when he talks. Can you please send me a list of head starts in my area for my three-year-old daughter. She's potty trained and she knows her ABC's already. Thanks

First Steps was an incredible program that helped two of our children. Without First Steps we wouldn't have been able to afford the hearing aids that both our children needed. We are very grateful for First Steps and the wonderful support! Because of early intervention, my second son who also received services wasn't given an IEP. The school district has denied all further help to us because he was doing so well. This was a very nice surprise but also very upsetting considering he has a genetic progressive hearing loss and will wear hearing aids for the rest of his life. Early intervention really worked here but now it is to the detriment of my son. I somehow feel that we almost would have been better in some ways to not intervene and then he would get the help that he will need in the future. I was told by the school district that we would have to wait for my son to fail in order to receive any further services. Something about that just doesn't seem right especially after all the hard work that my son, the teachers, and our family have done!

I found the First Steps program to be very helpful. If it wasn't for First Steps, my son would not have received good therapy.

Once we finally got a speech therapist that had an open schedule my child was almost two years old. So, my child only got about seven months of services. There are not enough workers for the children - they don't have open schedules.

First Steps has helped my family a lot. I wish there was a program to help the child from three to five to get the things they need.

As a provider and a parent with the First Steps program, I am extremely disappointed in the intake and eligibility process. My child was initially denied services by an intake coordinator without a speech evaluation being conducted. The intake coordinator said that since the doctor and Parents As Teachers had not documented a fifty percent delay that he was not eligible for services. Had I not been a provider and understood the eligibility process I probably would have thought my child was fine. When, in actuality, after being evaluated, he did have not only a fifty percent delay but also a hearing loss. How many kids have we missed due to situations like mine?

Our three-year-old evaluation with First Steps resulted in our child not needing services. However, when he was tested at the school, they felt he needed Title I services. That was March or April of 2004. The plan was to start him in Title I at the beginning of this school year. He has currently been in Title I since August 23. He attends two days a week, 8:25-11:25. He is doing well at this time. We have not had an IEP yet.

Our service coordinator was our first contact in this process. She was wonderful! She was always very encouraging to me personally as a mom and so kind/compassionate toward my child. She is a wonderful asset to this organization.

I just wanted to say that I know my son didn't receive First Steps until it was almost too late and our service coordinator was suppose to check in by phone once a month. I didn't hear anything from her until the Transition meeting three weeks before my son was to start ECSE.

It took numerous phone calls to get things started. I finally left a message saying it would be the last time I called. I finally got a call back. I had been warned it would be hard to get through. The speech therapist was wonderful with my son. She helped him a lot in the short time she worked with him.

My only regret is I wish I had known about this program sooner so he could have received the one-on-one sessions more than three and a half months.

We had difficulty locating a phone number (could a listing be added to phone book) at the start. Our service providers and service coordinator were terrific! The change in our child's abilities was profound and lasting as a result of all members of his team (occupational, physical, nutrition and service coordinator). Every interaction with these individuals was caring and professional. The purpose of paperwork mailed to our house was unclear. The monthly statements of services and billing appeared a poor use of resources given that we were not paying for these services. Also, the "measles-tested" paperwork and request for tax forms also seemed excessive given that we do not pay.

First Steps is a great program. We are so thankful First Steps was available to us.

I am just thrilled to see my daughter's progress with her speech. The First Steps program is certainly a blessing for speech delayed kids.

My daughter was discharged from First Steps after one year of therapy for physical and occupational delays as a result of prematurity. Program was great. Therapists were great. The coordinators were the problem. We went through three because of their lack of participation.

I don't know if we are currently receiving all of the services listed in the IEP because we just started on August 25, 2004.

This is an awesome program! My child would not have made the progress she has without it. I have referred other families to the program. The service coordinator was very helpful.

We moved from Dent County to St. Louis to help our son with more learning resources. First Steps did NOT transfer me. I had to call and call and reapply which was a big hassle. When services FINALLY started in Aug (?) - they only lasted to mid-December - although his birthday is January, 2001. Therapists were always calling off appointments. Eventually, I was told in December they weren't coming since his birthday was close and that they needed to work on replacing him with another child. The reason I disagree with many of the questions, is because I don't feel as if they even wanted to help my son. I only met and talked to his coordinator once; then never again. His therapists came late and left early to go to other appointments. After December's first week they randomly picked and chose days they would do therapy. I can count the number of times on ONE hand they came in January although his birthday isn't until the 31st. The biggest reason I wouldn't recommend this program is because I transferred him into school ALONE. I was told they would help me get him into school but I finally picked up the phone and did it myself months AFTER his birthday. He is in school (two weeks now) and doing better in these two weeks than those few months. His teachers are great and therapy lasts an ENTIRE session not just 20-30 minutes. I'm over it now. But I still wouldn't recommend it. Thank you for your time.

Excellent job!

I just want to say how grateful I am for our service coordinator and speech therapist. We were extremely pleased. My child made wonderful progress. We are also thankful to First Steps for being available to us. We learned so much as a family. Thank you!

It's the best program out there! Thanks for everything.

It took eight months to get my sons in-service for First Steps. I had to call the caseworker weekly just to find out what our next steps were. After four months of trying to reach my caseworker, I finally called her supervisor. Within a few days of talking with her supervisor I finally spoke with the caseworker, scheduled an interview, and had my son evaluated. It then took three months to begin services. The First Steps caseworkers are overburdened. There must be a more efficient way to evaluate children. It should not take eight months of persistence on the mother's part.

Our child is not in a special needs group so, most of these questions do not apply. Parents As Teachers referred our child because he did not hold or use scissors properly. Since we did not think of letting a two year old use scissors, it was our fault. Our child was in the program six months and our service provider missed or canceled about 50% of the appointments. She did a good job when she was here.

We need more speech therapy, which the school district is unwilling to provide. The IEP was pretty much set before the meeting was held.

Overwhelmed with so many people coming in my home. Services seemed to overlap. Could have been accomplished with less people in the home. Some therapists were excellent while others were poor.

Question #4: Only found out by Children's Mercy.

Question #7: Preschool

#3: Because he was almost three when he started but there was a meeting and it did go very well.

#7: Head Start for other child without special needs.

If it had not been up to my husband, my four year old son would not be going to school. The school did not listen to our concerns and came in with an IEP (first one) written. They did not want to address our concerns as I have seen in another district where I taught for 11 years. They have their plan and seem to make all children "fit" into it rather than what works for the child. My other child's transition meeting is soon and she gets the "same" plan - but her levels are completely different so no individualization except insert name here.

Had him tested at age two years and he didn't qualify at that time. At two and a half years he almost didn't qualify for speech and we had to really push. Then he only had one hour of speech a week with a BAD speech therapist. If he had had a better program earlier, he might be speaking better now. And now I feel he should have a more aggressive speech program. He has made progress but he'll be four years old in March. He needs a more one-on-one approach to help him with his speech.

My service coordinator and therapists were excellent. First Steps is a wonderful program and my daughter is proof. Thank you!

First Steps was great. Our Parents As Teachers and First Steps coordinator were wonderful and my son got a good start on what was needed for him in the ECSE program. We saw results, not so much in my child's speech right away, but in the way he communicated with others and his confidence. I feel so grateful to the people who helped my son. I now see weekly results. Thank you!

The First Steps program helped my son greatly! I have nothing but good things to say of this program. When my son first started he couldn't talk. All he could do was grunt and point to what he wanted. By the end of the program he was speaking! I've recommended to anyone who says their child needs help and everyone else I know with kids who have delays in development. You guys are the best at what you do! Please keep up the good work!

First Steps really helped my child. When we first started, she was so frustrated because she had speech delays and could not communicate well. Once she started with a speech therapist she made great improvements and was so much happier. Now she is in ECSE and loves going to school. She has become so much happier. I am glad we had this program to help us get the help for her. I think it has made a great improvement in her life and has helped her prepare for the future (i.e. school, social settings) by getting her the help she needed early.

This was for only one child. We had two sons go through the program.

We have twin boys. Our one son used the services of First Steps twice. The first time was for his gross motor skills. He had a developmental delay. After receiving services for eight months he was caught up to his peer level. He re-entered the program at age two and a half for his speech/communication delays along with his brother. We started the process when they turned two in January, but did not receive any services until late August. The delay was very unnecessary. The intake person just did not return calls or seem to place any urgency on the matter. In fact, she only returned calls when I threatened to contact her supervisor. So, due to her inability to process our sons in a timely fashion our sons only received the speech/communication therapy for four and a half months before having to transition to SSD.

Steps staff seemed lazy doing their part!

There was little direction, few phone calls returned, etc. If it weren't for my parent educator, I suspect we would not have ever received help. However, the therapists were wonderful! After looking back, the hold-up seems to be the actual First Steps employee's! Too bad for families like mine...we almost gave up!

Those who work with First Steps are extraordinary assets to the program. They were knowledgeable, affable and sincerely interested in our son's success. They were also creative and encouraging. Our son would not be communicating at the outstanding level he is without your help. The coordinating efforts and consideration were outstanding. They was always available and sincere in their concerns. Thank you.

I think First Steps was the best thing to happen to our family when we found out that our son had Apraxia. I loved the home environment. I don't know what we would have done without it. Also, I think I had the best service coordinator and speech therapist. They helped me with everything I needed. So thank you to everyone in First Steps. You have been a blessing to our family. Thank you

Question #1: We were fortunate to know someone who knew about First Steps and could direct us to the right numbers we needed to call. Therefore, we were able to get our services right away. If you don't know the right people, it doesn't seem as if anyone has ever heard of First Steps.

After transitioning to other therapists out of First Steps, we were informed/realized our daughter's First Steps therapists were very informed regarding equipment for her. Not only did we have the wrong size walker (too big) but it was set up wrong. This concerns me because a physical therapist brought us the walker from another family, thinking it would be correct for our child and almost a year later, a separate physical therapist set it up for her incorrectly, and also didn't realize it was way too big. Four professionals saw this and none knew it wasn't right for her or how to fix it. This was a years worth of time, and I can't help but wonder how much progress she could have made with the correct equipment, because she really took off once she got the correct size walker. Though all that worked with her were very nice and very professional in manner, I think the therapist should be somewhat familiar with equipment for children with special needs, especially since they were specializing in birth to three years of age. First Steps was great for our family. However, the physical therapist just were not on top of Cerebral Palsy care. Since then, we have learned so much from other providers and our own research that could have been done differently and possibly could have increased the positive outcomes we had. I think the care was good and the people were easy to work with but our daughter could have progressed further with the appropriate equipment and techniques.

We had such a successful experience with the therapist that we had through First Steps. I plan to take the "Praxis and add special education to my teaching certification. What wonderful therapists. They taught all of us so much. Thank you for this wonderful program and the opportunity for early intervention for our child and others like him.

My service coordinator was incredible. She also has a hearing impaired child which made it easier for her to be more understanding. If it wasn't for First Steps, I have no idea where we would be. You are incredible! What you did for my son and this family will never be forgotten. Because of my IFSP, my IEP went smoother. Thank you.

I filled this form out in regard my youngest son. My older son also went through First Steps. I feel the program has been wonderful for both boys. Thank you.

Thank you!

Without intervention from First Steps, I cannot even imagine where my son would be. There was no way we could have privately paid for the services he needed. It has truly been a miracle for our family.

First Steps was a wonderful experience for my family and I. We learned so much about our son's difficulties and how to deal with them. I feel like my son has a better chance at life now because of our speech therapist, who was not only a teacher, but a great person who tried to help all of us with all of our problems. When I heard First Steps might close, I was heartbroken. I don't think the Governor understands how valuable it was to my child and so many others. Thanks

More education on congenital glaucoma.

The program and help we received was outstanding. I don't believe that we could or would have received the same sort of coordinated effort to assist our child through private insurance or other means. We needed a service coordinator to get things arranged and moving in the proper direction. Thanks for everything.

I greatly appreciate the workers of the First Steps program. I'm glad my son was able to be a part of it because he greatly benefited from the program.

My son was in speech therapy. The speech therapist is very good and the services were very convenient since they were in our home. My daughter took speech when we lived in South Carolina and it was sometimes difficult to get her across town to her sessions twice a week (especially after I had my son).

First Steps was a waste of our time. The program is useless.

This is the best program my family has been a part of and my son would not be making the progress he is if it were not for the program and everyone involved. Thank you!

Our daughter was born with cleft lip and palate. When she was born, no one told us about this program at the hospital. We found out three months later when I enrolled in Parents as Teachers. It would help a lot of people if the hospital gave parents the information about First Steps so they know there are people who can help. Thank you.

The new service coordinator we were assigned after reconstructing was rude and made it seem like we didn't really need services. My daughter had made great strides in the year she was in First Steps, but I feel she tried to bring the program to an end abruptly. We felt very rushed at the end.

The First Steps program failed our child miserably. It took five to six months for a coordinator to contact us and once that meeting took place our son was almost three. He should have received occupational services but a therapist could not be coordinated to provide services. There was NO transitioning support provided and even though our service coordinator was cordial, she was inexperienced and misrepresented the First Steps process and our rights. We filed for compensatory services and were granted some time. But, our family and our son were treated with disrespect and with a serious lack of professionalism and caring. Even though our time with First Steps was brief, we have nothing positive to say about it!

Our daughter, who has a brain tumor, would not have made such a positive improvement without First Steps. The First Steps program gave our family burden relief and gave us hope. Thank you so much for your services and dedication to our little ones.

The First Steps program has been a huge blessing. It has given my daughter the tools she needs to have a successful educational experience and to communicate with those around her. Her life would not be so happy without First Steps. First Steps is a vital program that needs to be protected from ignorant politicians such as Matt Blunt. Thank you so much! FYI: It was my Parents as Teachers educator that hooked us up with First Steps. The two programs should work together more instead of competing.

Our son went from saying nothing at two years to having no problems and no interventions in preschool. I felt that First Steps services was a big factor in this.

Please keep this program alive for our little precious children. They need us to help them in the best way we can. Support education.

Our child now qualifies for Title I preschool in the fall. The wonderful therapists not only helped our child in all areas he needed, but also gave us the tools to work with him on a daily basis to give him the maximum progress. The program is a godsend! He can go in school and never know that he had any delays. Everyone we worked with were wonderful! Keep up the GREAT work helping our kids with delays or disabilities.

We had many problems when the change of service coordinators occurred. Our IFSP was missing with First Steps. It was difficult to find a therapist to work with us and then many left servicing the First Steps program. We finally found a fabulous speech therapist. Our occupational therapist was difficult to find. Overall, our son made huge gains in all areas.

My school does not have 3 year old preschool program. First Steps is a wonderful and needed program. Has helped our family and child tremendously. Thank you. We are putting our child in a private school to receive this and speech.

Good program. Should be continued for all that can use it in the future.

My grandson was extremely premature, therefore, very slow in progress. With the help of your dedicated teachers, he is now almost where he belongs and in some or most areas, ahead of schedule. My daughter was a drug user and was never around for his services, so First Steps didn't let him fall through the cracks, but worked with me to insure his proper attention. I can't thank everyone enough for their help through all of this. Without all of you, I don't know where we would be.

The First Steps program helped us tremendously. Our service coordinator was invaluable: Advocacy, referral, services and she did all the leg work so I had more time with my son. All areas were beneficial and has made a dramatic impact for my child and on my family. My child had more assistance, better services, stronger advocacy and thorough services with First Steps and IFSP than he is getting with ECSE and his IEP. Thanks for this program!

We felt services were exactly what we needed and made a big difference.

First Steps helped our child with significant delayed development of Gross Motor skills. Their assistance was invaluable in getting our daughter caught up. First Steps personnel were extremely professional and knowledgeable while they helped us get through a difficult time. Thank you First Steps!

Service Coordinator appeared for meetings and returned calls if I called her, otherwise, I didn't hear from her. We have training issues (staff not adequately trained to provide services in IEP). I think First Steps is a wonderful program. I believe my child didn't receive the full benefit of the program because he was two years and 3 months old when we were told about the program. First Steps did, however, provide us with some compensatory time. I believe had I known about First Steps and Parents as Teachers sooner, my child's progress would have been even further along. The therapist and therapy my child received through First Steps helped him and our family with his disability. Most of the advocating, planning, etc., that was done for our child was done by myself, the day care and the therapist-NOT the service coordinator. She did, however, show up for scheduled meetings. First Steps is the first and only resource for families with kids that have disabilities. I can't believe that funding and cuts were ever a consideration.

I believe the First Steps program made a world of difference for my child. He no longer has a language delay as a result of the early intervention. Thank you First Steps.

Our child was able to enter into a preschool program for three year olds without requiring further assistance because of the help she received through First Steps. They were able to bring her up to age appropriate levels before she started her preschool program.

We loved the physical therapist coming to our house! It was the only way we could manage getting therapy.

We've checked into many other options so our daughter can have a comparable program to other kids her age. Our school doesn't have a program for the three or four year old age group.

Floor time was a waste of time. But the other ladies that worked with my son were amazing. Thank you for everything.

First Steps was a great help to our family. Great work! Keep it up and hopefully this program stays a part of the Missouri programs.

I was very impressed to be able to pick our speech pathologist. She was wonderful and I could not say enough good things. The original service coordinator, I never heard from her after the first meeting. I know there was a reorganization of the program after which I met regularly with the new service coordinator. I was very happy that my son received services he so much needed. He is thriving now with continued services. I find it very say to know now that with the reorganization my son would not have qualified since he was not "50% delayed in all areas", not just "overall" as he was. We have health insurance but, we could not get services because they called it "developmental". My husband and I both work full time but would not be able to afford \$120 per hour for special therapy.

My daughter showed a hearing loss at birth. No one at St. Lukes, where she was born, St. Anthony's, where she had additional screening, or Children's Hospital even MENTIONED First Steps. I'm kind of persistent and eventually spoke with CID and they suggested I contact you. Our coordinator was wonderful and helpful and truly cared about our daughter. Any family working with her is very lucky.

Thank you.

Missouri First Steps has helped my child a lot. She is talking more now than she ever has.

We were thrilled to receive the services for our son. We could not have afforded the services otherwise! Thanks.

We had overall good experiences with First Steps with the exception of our service coordinator. Not that we had much need for contact, but we had zero all year long. We were kept informed by our therapists and our Parents As Teachers advisor. Neither service coordinator did anything for us.

I believe the First Steps program is an invaluable tool for our children. I think funding and other resources should be given priority.

I was not impressed with your services. My child learned nothing and has learned more in school than she ever did with First Steps. I could not keep the same therapist coming to my house in the year that I used your program. We had three different ones for behavior, four for speech and five for occupational therapy. Only one was requested by me not to come anymore because she was rude and would not talk to me about my child. I would not recommend your program to anyone who I know and I would discourage anyone from using your services.

Our physical therapist was great. We could not have made the big steps we made without her. Our occupational therapist was the second person to deal with us. She changed jobs when we were almost done and we miss her a lot. Without our service coordinator I don't think I would have made it. Our speech therapist, taught me a lot about helping our son on learning speech. Our occupational therapist was our favorite red head. Our son LOVED THIS WOMAN. She helped him walk and do things when he fought everyone else. We were one of the families that went to Jefferson City when M.B. tried to take it away.

We had some wonderful therapists while in the First Steps program. Unfortunately, we also ran across some sub optional therapists. However, our service coordinator helped to remediate that problem and get new therapists. Some of the key therapists have been invaluable to our family. Our son does not receive school district services as the services they were offering would not meet his needs. My husband and I opted to save our time, energy and money for our son rather than trying to push the SD to provide proper services. So, we are now private paying for his therapy with some of our First Steps providers.

Question 4: I feel that this is not common knowledge. I learned about First Steps from my doctor. Prior to the diagnosis, I had never heard of it. Section 3, Question 3: The Rockwood district left parts out, then assumed they had been answered, and billed themselves. These were later corrected. This includes a visit and a hearing test. They asked as to his ability to dress himself, feed himself, etc. Section 3, Question 4: This depends. The ABA is insufficient and at present they are gearing up to take away further services even though we aren't seeing sufficient progress. Section 3, Question 5: Again, we can't see. They say there is but our son's non verbal. The things they say he does, he doesn't do for us. Section 3, Question 7: Our experience with Parents As Teachers was awful. The woman actually gave us so much bad information that she discouraged me from questioning there being something wrong with my son who would be diagnosed as Autistic. Comments: The physical therapist was excellent as was the developmental therapist. All therapists helped us adjust to our son's diagnosis of Autism as well as helped him with the basic skills he lacked. We also were able to attend Judevine through First Steps which proved tremendously valuable to us.

Criteria for qualifying for services was very ambiguous. Results of more than one speech therapy test plus opinions of pediatricians and Parents As Teachers representatives should have been taken into account. My child was denied speech help on the first evaluation but on the second go around, he qualified because more factors were considered. Something was not right about that and hopefully things improved for other families. All professionals involved were very nice and caring people however.

First Steps helped tremendously. It was a wonderful program that helped form a bridge for our child. It was great to have a center point so everyone was on the same page in evaluations. I don't think it would have been as beneficial had we done it by ourselves. Thank you.

First Steps was very helpful in helping our son with his speech. We adopted him from China and he was 14 months old and knew no English. Everyone was very knowledgeable and more than helpful. Our son is now three and a half and his speech is wonderful. We can't thank all of his workers and First Steps enough. This is an excellent program.



I think First Steps is a wonderful program that helped our child catch up. I believe this program helps so many families and I will forever be thankful. I think that the program has been abused on the managerial side. My original coordinator just went away without a phone call, a note, anything! Even the therapists could not reach her and didn't know what happened! My second coordinator, while friendly, had NO IDEA of what was going on with my child. She would call and have the wrong file in front of her. She would call over and over about a subject that we had already discussed. She seemed to be pushing speech therapy before the doctors even felt there was a concern. I called a couple of times to voice my concerns; but there seems to be a lack of supervision for coordinators. I think that should be corrected. I noticed that the owner of the company that provided both a physical therapist and an occupational therapist was also partly trying to ensure her income from my son's services. She, at one point, didn't have a therapist available (I forget if it was physical or occupational) but her concern seemed to be more about me using her to gain a therapist than the general need for my son to receive help. Apparently, at one point, her and the coordinator pushed for a speech therapist saying I needed to get one before we were no longer in the program. The speech therapist was here for almost an hour and I noticed she billed First Steps for an hour and a half. I have much to say and tried to share my feelings; but my concerns fell on deaf ears! This abuse has cost the children of this program. It's very sad that greed supersedes need!

We found out through our child's care provider that our speech therapist was arriving during lunch time and doing our son's therapy while he ate lunch. She was rewarding him for doing certain things with the food from his lunch. We thought this was very inappropriate. We did not find this out until he had only two sessions left. But, I thought you should know. We appreciate all the help First Steps gave our family and we hope that future Governor's will see the importance also.

The speech therapy my daughter received through First Steps was extremely valuable. It greatly impacted her overall development.

My foster child no longer delays as a result of her help from First Steps.

This was a great program for our 16 week premature daughter. The therapists were wonderful and gave me confidence working with her.

I was not pleased with the service provided through the Regional Center when my son was first born. As a result, I went through my health insurance for the first two years of early intervention therapy. My initial contact person was very discouraging. I believe she has now retired.

Our service coordinator was awesome for the evaluation for services. She returned phone calls in a timely manner and explained the evaluation process. Our other service coordinator helped our family with the transitioning process and was knowledgeable. Our therapist touched our lives in many ways! Her expertise as a speech-language pathologist was remarkable. Her skills and ability to teach us about our son's condition and how we could help him with his speech and homework made us much more knowledgeable! She is a blessing and a true asset to your staff.

The program is excellent for kids that have learning issues. My kids had speech issues and are now speaking so well that I am so thrilled. Thanks and this certainly would not have been possible without First Steps.

The First Steps program was vital to my son's development. He is doing great in his ECSE classroom and continues to make great progress. Thank you for your help.

Everyone we came in contact with through First Steps were all amazing people. The therapists were incredible. Our daughter and family benefited so much from this program. It would be a disservice and a slap in the face to take it away! During our three years with First Steps we paid nothing, we are not wealthy (nor poor) but not having to worry was a load off our backs. We worried so much about our kids - not having to be concerned about paying was very beneficial!

We had two of our sons in the First Steps program, both for delay in speech. The help they received helped them overcome any problems but also decreased their frustration/anger with their difficulty communicating with us.

We had an outstanding experience with First Steps. I think too many people were involved in the administrative portion of it. I think it could be streamlined a bit, but as far as the actual support and therapy we received, it was definitely valued, needed and critical to our child's development. Not all states have a similar program and we felt very lucky and blessed to be in a state which supported it's youngest children so well.

I felt like the service coordinator was severely overpaid considering we only heard from her at IEP time but yet were billed around \$60.00 a month. Also, caregivers (therapists) did not always visit as care planned. My child went six months without seeing a physical therapist that was supposed to visit monthly.

I cannot express how much the First Steps program helped our family care for our son. We feel very fortunate that we had those professionals in our lives when we needed them the most. They helped build our confidence in caring for him in all areas. I honestly don't know where we would be today if First Steps hadn't been in our life. Thank you.

Great program! Governor should not cut the program.

Thank you so much! Your program is worthy! I hope funding increases. Governor Blunt needs a child with special needs.

I hope budget cuts don't affect First Steps and the very important services it provides. Early intervention is so much more effective! I was very satisfied with the program and the vast improvements in my daughter's development in the six months with the program. Lisa R. Putting

My child is still way under age level on her speech. The physical therapist and occupational therapist through First Steps was great, but the speech therapist has never been reliable on showing up and has contributed to my child having slower speech progress. Overall, First Steps was great.

The program is good if you know how to access all available resources. They are not always voluntarily offered. The parent, it seems most times, is the only advocate for the child. Currently, I am trying to disenroll my child because so much of the program is being cut that it is no longer of benefit to my child and his development.

Our child was in Parents As Teachers until he turned three.

I was very unhappy about the way the First Steps process started out. The contact person was never in her office, nor would she return my calls in a timely manner. It took three to four months from the time I tried to get my daughter into the program till I got a service coordinator assigned to me. After I got the service coordinator, things went a lot smoother and she kept in touch to make sure everything was going fine. But I felt that my daughter was deprived of services that she really needed during those beginning months when I was under the impression it was to have only taken six weeks.

The process of time of paperwork to get the first evaluation was too long. I started the process when he was turning two and we did not get in and start therapy until he was two and a half! I feel it was too much paperwork or not enough personnel to make it a timely process.

We have had a fantastic experience through First Steps and would highly recommend it to those in need of services.

First Steps program needs to be more flexible for ABA therapists (Time Sheets/Authorization) so that they can work on different teams/different hours each week. Therapist's timesheets should be signed by parents so they are held accountable. (This includes Speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, ABA and consultants). There needs to be more coordinators so that response can be faster. There needs to be funding for RDI and nutrition therapy. All parents with newborns should be introduced to First Steps through the hospital, Parents As Teachers and other early intervention programs.



Finding out about First Steps and working with the intake coordinator was very difficult, but our service coordinator and providers were wonderful. It made a HUGE impact on my daughter.

The speech therapist who came to our home to work with our child was extremely skilled. I was very pleased with what she was able to accomplish in the few months she worked with him.

Our son's speech therapist did a great job. The transition out of First Steps to school was very BAD. My son qualified for one and a half hours of help each week at First Steps and right off the bat the school just wanted to give him one half hour each week. In fact, I have a lot more to say on this subject and would be happy to talk to anyone about what should be done or changed.

We would be lost without the First Steps program. The staff at the school district's program have been invaluable!

We appreciate the help of the First Steps program. Our physical therapist was able to help our daughter as well as teach us how to help her advance in her area of weakness. Thank you for this valuable program.

I work in a pediatrics' office and I knew when my child was two years old and still did not talk that there was something wrong. First Steps helped my son learn how to express himself. He never stops talking. He counts and colors and they taught me ways to get him to cooperate. I loved all of my therapists and the First Steps program. Without you, I don't know where we'd be now.

Without First Steps guidance, I would not know where to turn for help. You all had done a remarkable job in helping a family like mine to be as normal as possible. From my heart, I can't thank you enough. Best regards.

If it was not for the First Steps program, my child would not be capable of functioning daily. Nor would we as his parents be capable to care for him. We are now faced with another child who requires services, and I truly look forward to dealing with First Steps again. It is comforting to know my children have a chance of a normal life because of First Steps.

In the beginning we discussed occupational therapy as applicable to our son. We initiated with an occupational therapist who was gone for a wedding (her own) and, honestly, I don't remember what happened after that, but nothing happened. Our son was progressing fine so I did not pursue it. But, I'm not sure our service coordinator did either. Our service coordinator was nice and attended our first meeting but we had no interaction after that other than one call she made to check in. If I needed more, I would have pursued her but I think I expected more initiation and content of value from a service coordinator. Thanks so much for offering this service. My son is now fully up to speed in terms of his development. Our physical therapist was very helpful and took personal interest in our son and this family.

In the beginning we had a hard time getting our son enrolled with First Steps. Our first service coordinator was NOT very knowledgeable regarding what would and would not be covered. We then requested an independent service coordinator who helped us. I feel like you should have service coordinators experienced which each individuals special needs.

My daughter has severe speech problems called Apraxia.

First Steps has been wonderful for both of my children.

First Steps is a wonderful organization. They helped three of my grandchildren and did a fantastic job. They all got over their problems and are doing everything right for their age or better.

This program is quick to say a child has a need that is not true. First of all, children are not going to do their best for someone they don't know. Some will not talk or play for people they don't know. This program locks children in because they don't respond to them. This program looks for development by age. To me, this is not good. Children come around at different ages. So, to me, this program looks to make a child look undeveloped.

Our foster child was overweight. She had already been in the program when we got her. All her physical therapy happened before we got her. They would come out monthly to weight her. I don't know anything about the IEP. I'm afraid I don't have enough information or contact to properly answer this survey. Thank you.

First Steps saved our lives with services that were provided to our child and us. Through these services we were able to understand our son and he gained skills to communicate with us. Early intervention is so important and we are very grateful for the help our son received. Special School now teaches him on a full time basis. First Steps made their job a lot easier.

The school set up the transitioning and IEP meetings. The First Steps program is a wonderful program. We are foster parents so when we were given two children, they were in First Steps. The transition from the biological parent to the foster home was very easy. Transition from First Steps to preschool ECSE was done by the school. The children are now out of First Steps. Thanks for your help.

I feel that the First Steps program was an integral part of my child's development. We spent every day, every hour, every minute with him and so we were able to communicate with him and understand his communications. It took people who did not see him every day to "open our eyes" and we knew that we needed help. First Steps taught him, and us, what we needed to do to get him on the right track. Thank you.

Several of therapists we saw seemed to operate on the theory that all children have sensory integration disorder (DSI). This resulted in therapies that were a complete waste of time. I complained about this to our service coordinator, and she strongly agreed with me and promised to have our son evaluated by someone who was not "gung ho about sensory integration disorder" (her words). The result was an evaluation by a therapist who insisted our son had this disorder despite the fact that he failed every item but one on the checklist. When asked if she had ever evaluated a child and NOT come to the conclusion that he had DSI, she answered, "No, you can always find something." A complete waste of time and worthless.

The speech therapists who worked with my son would often come late and leave early. I really don't think it helped him very much.

An area not addressed on this questionnaire is the procedure to acquire the various therapists approved on the IFSP. What a terrible hassle for the parent. The matrix is confusing. It is not updated either. Trying to contact the therapists was very difficult - untimely responses. By the time therapy actually started for my son, almost two crucial months passed from the date of the IFSP. This process of acquiring therapists needs to be streamlined. A parent obviously has enough on their plate.

We were very pleased with Missouri's First Steps program, especially with our coordinator. She took the time to truly understand the needs of our child and to ensure that he received appropriate services. She was also very helpful during the transition process, making herself readily available to answer our questions.

The First Steps Program was the crucial step that helped our child overcome his paraxial and start speaking. Our speech therapist was wonderful and was a huge reason our son did so well. The only negative thing I have to say is that we never had any contact with our service coordinator apart from the first meeting and the transition meeting. In terms of that, we felt alone in the program. Luckily, our speech therapist was familiar enough with First Steps that she was able to guide us through the program.

My daughter attends Central Institute for the Deaf. She is profoundly deaf and uses a cochlear implant to hear. She is talking in conversation and is excelling in every area. Most of her success is due to early intervention and First Steps working in a swift manner. As a parent, I had to be proactive and diligent in pursuing the needed services and First Steps provided the services in a timely manner and I found the entire experience educational and inspiring. I believe early intervention is crucial to a disabled child's success in life, along with completely committed parents) or care givers). Pamela Brennan

I am so grateful for the First Steps Program. My daughter would never have been doing this well without it. It has been a wonderful experience.

We participated in the marked resources but it would have been easier if First Steps had told us about them.

The early one on one intervention helped my child meet age appropriate skills and gain confidence in the areas that were worked on. Working in the home environment helped make my child feel at ease and work on needed skills. I credit this program for allowing my child to learn how to eat and talk with confidence.

Our transition process was okay but not the easiest. The First Steps program ended and I felt left on my own in the area of getting my child tested or evaluated. Why doesn't First Steps allow my therapist to administer the developmental or assessment tests? It was so hard to enter into the "special services" department of our school system and have them test my child when they know NOTHING about him. There was also this attitude of, "Well, I guess we'll HAVE to test him since First Steps didn't." No one seemed to want to carry the "assessment" of my child. It seems logical to the parent, that the people that have worked with their child, often since birth, would be the ones to assess or test him/her before they are passed on or graduated from the program. This is a common complaint I've heard in the First Steps program. If it's a money issue, just give the parent the option to pay for the test. I would have gladly paid for the test myself if only someone would have communicated with me. Our testing/assessment experience was not a bad experience but it was not a good one either; strange place, strange people, and hard to schedule. I wish so much that our transition into the school system could have started off better. Thanks for allowing me to voice my thoughts.

My son is not in First Steps anymore. Last year he was and it was a great service.

We are delighted with the services offered for my son's speech. Clay County Health Department has been excellent. We thank everyone involved.

Our family and son is much better off because of the services provided by the First Steps program. Children born prematurely or with disabilities are at such a great risk from the moment of birth and this program is crucial to their development and well being. I was therefore shocked and dismayed when I heard our Governor, Matt Blunt, was going to cut this program. I cannot imagine what he could possibly be thinking by cutting this program? Perhaps I should not have voted for him? I sincerely hope Mr. Blunt does not ever consider this again. Maybe if his son was born 3.5 months early, had a brain hemorrhage at two days old, had breathing problems, heart problems, kidney problems and eye problems,...he would think twice. This program is INVALUABLE to these children and their families. Shame on you Mr. Blunt, but please learn from this and do not allow this program to be cut, and give these children the best possible start we can offer them.

I think that First Steps was very beneficial to my daughter. The therapists helped her and taught me how to help her.

First Steps is a wonderful and valuable program and I am very glad my daughter participated in the available programs and therapy. It is a lifeline to families with a special needs child. I would have been lost without First Steps!

I wanted to say that my son's speech therapist gave him the ground work he needed to start him on the path he is going. His speech therapist always kept her appointments, was always on time and, if needed, would stay longer than her hour to answer any questions I had. She told me about the young children with developmental delay (ycdd), which I had no clue was out there. Because of her my son tested into and is now actively part of this program. He still has a long way to go, but he has truly come so far. She even made a point to be there at his screening and talked with me and the ycdd teachers. I am forever grateful for her and what she helped my son to accomplish. I hope this helps your survey even more. Thank you.

My child is now within her age group and beyond. She is now on a consulting basis once a month and progressing rapidly. If we had not been fortunate enough to have had First Steps and all the people within, I'm not sure my daughter would be as far as she is. She still has some weakness on her right side but without knowing she's got hyposthenia, you would never know it. Thank you to First Steps.

Without Missouri First Steps my twin boys would still be in a world closed off from ours. Today they are bright, interactive, excelling individuals who are learning to be more engaged and expressive as each day passes. I can't thank you enough for opening the doors for my children. Their future is much brighter thanks to these wonderful services.

First Steps was the best thing for my child. I really do not think he would be as far as he is without it. If I would have had to pay for these services, we could not have afforded it even with insurance. We really hope other children can get the benefits our child received. Thank you so very much.

Our family is very grateful for the services that First Steps provided. We tell others often about the first class treatment and services that we received. We are very hopeful our son will be totally caught up by kindergarten. He has improved greatly with all his delays and his confidence shows! He might not have been so lucky if services were not available.

I was very pleased and thankful for the First Steps program. It benefited our son in so many ways and we gained so many friendships and resources. As you can see, I marked a couple of "Don't Know" questions under the ECSE section. That is because there is very little, if any, communication with his therapists. I have made attempts to keep tabs on his progress and what he is working on but receive very little feedback. He attends classes twice a week receiving 15 minutes a day with each therapist. To me, this isn't much at all. From what I can make of the goals it is more about adapting to the school setting as opposed to improving or even maintaining what he has gained thus far. I just feel the school program could be even a little more aggressive for the benefit of the children so they don't lose what they gained in the First Steps Program.

I enjoyed working with the First Steps providers that came to my home. They helped me and my child tremendously. I'm glad I was involved with this program. Thank you.

Our therapist was great with our daughter and has helped my daughter by giving her the building blocks she needed to begin to communicate her wants and needs in her everyday life.

I was disappointed by the fact that we didn't get occupational therapy earlier for my son. We expressed concerns initially in key areas and really had to push to obtain intervention. This is such an important program to our community. Our son has developed immensely through ECSE services. I am just disappointed how First Steps managed the process through transition.

My daughter had a severe speech disability. First Steps made a huge start in our communication with our daughter. This program is a true benefit! We truly appreciate First Steps!

My child is currently receiving services through her insurance company. Our special school district first agreed to do reciprocal services with another county and when it came time for services they denied reciprocal services therefore making it impossible to get my child to and from our county special school district. The First Steps program was recommended by my pediatrician and was very helpful. But, it was not easy to exit the program when I felt I was wasting their time and mine.

Even though my child, fortunately, has never needed any intervention no does he have any "special needs", I do appreciate the services that were made known to me and the support and assistance (if I should need it) would also come assumingly from our caseworker. It's nice to know that there are those resources like you guys available to families in need. Thanks for all the invested time.

We were very upset when we learned that our service coordinator should have referred us to KC Regional Center. I am still having a difficult time learning about this organization and how they can help us. I feel the service coordinator got the ball rolling with the school district and then just deserted us. Even though she didn't help us in the end, we still strongly believe in the First Steps program and will do whatever necessary to make sure it is an ongoing program available to Missouri children.

We moved here from another state due to our jobs. My son had been in the equivalent program "Early Steps" since he turned two. If there had been no First Steps program here in Missouri, we would not have moved here. We've had a great experience and my son has made outstanding progress.

I am pleased with the time we have had with the program although it has been short. Not nearly enough time to give the help he needs. Also, I need to find a program to help my son. He is not doing to well yet in school. I know that not a lot of time has passed yet. I need to know what steps to take if he doesn't progress or even get the kind of help he needs. Mrs. Washington

First Steps saved our family! Our son suffered two cardiac arrests his first week of life and his prognosis was dire. We learned about First Steps in the NICU after hearing that if he survived, he would have life-long disabilities. Through First Steps our son received occupational, physical, speech, developmental and nutritional services. We slowly watched our son emerge from unresponsive to a vivacious, energetic three year old who runs, smiles, speaks, eats and attends school. His delays are quite unnoticeable to most today. We are a middle class family, but the medical bills were, of course, our number one financial priority at the time and there is no way we would have been able to pay for the services he required. We are greatly appreciative of the excellent services and amazing therapists who helped us teach our son. We were heartsick to hear of the funding losses to this program. I am a firm believer that those three short years of intensive therapy saved our family and my son from a lifetime of needs.

Our family was very happy with the First Steps program. The program taught us techniques which we still use to help teach our daughter. She is now in an early childhood program and still making huge progress. Without the early intervention I don't think she would be doing this good. Our therapists were great and all the information we received was very helpful.

First Steps was a wonderful program to be a part of. It made dealing with my son's delays much easier and equipped me with the tools needed to work with him on a daily basis. He couldn't have gotten the therapy without the program. We had such wonderful therapists. You'd never know today that he'd been through occupational, physical and speech therapy. We are very grateful to the program! Please keep up the great work for other needy families! The program truly blessed and changed my son's life.

Child's mother is EMR and has no transportation.

Boone was great, but we were not happy with Moberly Rehabilitation. That's why we switched.

First Steps was wonderful for my son. He was not talking at all and was very frustrated. He would have severe tantrums such as banging his head on the wall. With the First Steps speech program his frustration slowly began to disappear. Our speech therapist was wonderful. She had him saying things to help him everyday to start with. This eliminated his frustration. By the end of First Steps he was putting three or more words together. It has been wonderful for our family. Thank you.

Overall, I was very unhappy with my experience with First Steps. In a matter of six months, three therapists quit. It wasn't until our third therapist that we found a good therapist. She discovered that in addition to speech and language services, our son needed occupational therapy as well. However, it was too late because we were already in the process of transitioning to Early Childhood. Our service coordinator was not very sympathetic either. It was obvious she was working for the bureaucracy rather than advocating for the needs of my child.

The service coordinator we originally had was great. When it was switched to the state appointed coordinator, we were very disappointed. After the switch it took her three months to contact us and that was only after our occupational therapist had brought us to her attention. We would have missed our transition meeting if it had not been for our speech therapist.

This service is a blessing. My son is doing very well. The teachers are wonderful. I am very thankful for this service you provide. Keep up the good work! Thanks again.

My daughter's first speech therapist was clueless and made no progress with her. Our second therapist was wonderful and helped our family and words couldn't express our gratitude.

As a former elementary school teacher, I know first hand the importance of this program. I have been impressed with every aspect of this program. Early intervention is the key to help a lot of children. The intake coordinator and the service coordinator were extremely knowledgeable and helpful throughout our entire experience.

We loved our second service coordinator. We did not like our first service coordinator because she didn't help. Our second service coordinator informed our family about the transition process and options available for our child. A smooth and effective transition occurred thanks to her. She did all the paper work one month before my child's third birthday.

I initially contacted First Steps when my son was about eighteen months old. I was told that they allotted services based on gestational age (he was six weeks premature at birth) and that the child was to function at a 50% deficit. Therefore, he was too young to qualify for services. It was not until after he was diagnosed with Autism that First Steps became involved. I wonder how much more beneficial the services would have been if he had gotten them at eighteen months. I feel as though I should not have been turned away over the phone without them even seeing him or giving him any tests. But when we did start with First Steps, it was wonderful. Most of the therapists we had were amazing and we thank God every day that they were in our lives.

I think all services need to be discussed after leaving First Steps. Not just the ones First Steps, Head Start and ECSE can offer. We needed help finding other preschools, therapies, and services that are available if we could pay out of pocket. Some things were not feasible but some things were-you should help families find things in their communities and leave it to them or ask them if they would be willing to pay for some services if they can. I felt like we were only offered things that were free which I can understand why-but all options need to be addressed. You can never have enough information about all services available. Thanks for all your help and support. We couldn't have gotten this far in our child's development without you all. Thanks Again!

First Steps has helped me understand and work with my child better and so he can have a better future. Thanks First Steps

It was a great program to be a part of and really increased our awareness of our child's needs.

Accessing the First Steps program was very easy for me because of my background as an Early Childhood Special Ed Teacher. Since I was aware of my rights and the legal guidelines-specifically those concerning timelines within which certain meetings should be held/assessment made during intake-things happened fairly quickly. However, if I didn't have the ECSE experience that I do, I would not have known the timelines and the intake process would have taken a very long time. I had to push every step and "threaten" due process in order to get timelines met. Once intake was complete my experiences with my service providers have been wonderful.

The First Steps program helped my son in a way that I could not. He is talking constantly. There are times where we still have problems but we, as a family, now have the tools to help him. Thank you.

We had a wonderful experience with our coordinator and therapist. Both were eager to help in any way. I spoke with them out and around our area and am always asked how our child is. Even though we are no longer part of the First Steps program, I feel that we could easily obtain help or reference at any time. Our daughter gained much, and is thriving as she approaches her third birthday. Thank you for all your assistance.

Very pleased with the services received. Would recommend these services to other families. Much needed program for our children!

It was very difficult to qualify for the program. I think it is a wonderful service and it really helped my son to advance. Perhaps it would have been helpful to have been in the program sooner.

This program is a must for our children, however there needs to be improvements in the program. For instance, we recently moved and it took five months to get services started in our new area mostly due to a breakdown with our previous service provider.

First Steps has really helped our child develop and learn. We really appreciate the work they do.

We have turned to independent therapists to work with our child at home because we do not feel he is receiving all the therapy he needs through the school district. While First Steps went out of their way to provide anything at all to help our child's progress and to help him qualify for services, the school district seems bent on making sure he qualifies for as little as possible. The school district is way to stingy when it comes to giving our children the help they need. It was very hard to leave First Steps behind because First Steps truly put our child's needs first and the school district seems more concerned with their own "corporate" needs. However, since this survey is about First Steps, I will say again that First Steps is a wonderful program and literally saved my child from a life of being speechless, immobile and unable to feed himself. Thanks to First Steps he is in preschool without an aid and doing quite well.

My son's speech provider was resolved through First Steps and no further assistance is needed. His language and vocabulary skills are right on target.

The staff at the Special Learning Center are wonderful. I couldn't say enough good things about them.

We had a wonderful experience and our child still talks about her therapists. Everyone there left her with a positive outlook.

I feel that the First Steps program is a waste of taxpayers money. I'm still waiting for the results from the tests that were performed on my child back in February-March. The coordinator failed to or the speech therapist refused to give me any information that I could help my child with at home. I was authorized for three times a week for the three months in the program. They saw my daughter a total, including the first meeting, of four times and probably charged the state \$150.00 per session. It was supposed to be 60 minute sessions and, in actuality, was only 40 minutes. I feel that the four months put my child four months behind rather than helped at all. She is in private therapy and is doing great. She is only about three months behind now NO THANKS to First Steps. I feel sorry for all of your participants in at least Greene County. I'm glad I had enough common sense to pull her out when I did. P.S. I voted for zero funding of government programs related to early childhood development.

Our First Steps coordinator was top notch. I've learned so much through her it's made a huge difference in our son's quality of life. She was great during the transition process to NKCSO.

The only way I knew about the services was because I am an educator. My child would not be where he is today without this program. Early intervention is CRITICAL!

Special therapist provided was excellent!

Chance did not stay in First Steps as long as I wanted. But they did a good job. The only thing that he needs now is school. One's that have good speech because he still does not talk.

First Steps was the only service we were able to use since our insurance did not cover our child. I do not know how we would have survived without the services we received. Thank you.

I believe the services my child received from First Steps has provided an opportunity for my son to "catch up" to his appropriate age level. Without First Steps, he would still be behind. They not only helped him, but they helped our whole family with support as well as ideas to help him and ourselves. I will always be grateful to First Steps and our providers.

This is such a great program. I know there is talk of discontinuing funding for this program and that would be truly tragic. They helped us so much and although we no longer need their help I personally know many who do. I know I would have been hard pressed to pay a private specialist to give the help we received. Thank you to all who contributed!

During the time we started the process for qualifying, it was really up to the parents to keep the ball rolling. Otherwise, the services we received were great. Our son no longer needs services. The speech therapist gave us tools to use with our son which also carried over to our other child.

My son's progress was absolutely impacted by the services provided by First Steps. His speech pathologist clicked with him immediately and we saw results within a short period of time. Our service coordinator was very diligent in scheduling the meetings and called me several times to ensure my satisfaction with the program. My son came out of his shell and is a much more outgoing three year old. I feel the services provided to my family were invaluable! Thanks so much.

Wonderful program which helped our son from having further more severe physical problems by early intervention.

We were already at WIC and had Parents As Teachers. Answer to #4: When my son was in the hospital, no one at Children's Hospital told us about the First Steps program or Nurse for Newborns. I found out through our Parents As Teachers from the Northwest School District R-I. If it wasn't for her I would have never known. The program has helped our family out. We now have a little boy who can be a little boy (with continue help from the school district.) You as a program need to get the word out for your service to be better used for all the children who are really in need. Thank you!

Excellent program! My child greatly benefited from the services he received. Our service coordinator, Lisa Greenberg, was thorough, knowledgeable, timely, and kind! Receiving services in our own home can not even compare to having to go to a "service clinic" setting. He did so much better in "his comfort zone," in his own home for this therapy. Thank you to all who dedicate themselves to such a truly wonderful program.

When my son started with First Steps, he was not sitting up, holding his bottle or talking. First Steps helped my son so much that now at three he is walking with the help of a walker and feeding himself and using sign language to communicate. We love First Steps. We were one of the families on the Capitol's steps supporting First Steps when the threat of canceling was heard. Thank you!



We have experienced First Steps through St. Louis City from March 2003-June 2005. During this period, my son had two different physical therapists, one occupational therapist, and one developmental therapist. The first physical therapist was wonderful but due to her personal move to out of state, we had to have another physical therapist. I learned each physical therapist in First Steps has different knowledge's and experiences. I wish there was some educational system for new therapists so that the family does not have to suffer for their lack of knowledge. We had a fantastic occupational and developmental therapist and there was no complaints about them. I also wanted to mention that the service coordinator did nothing for our family. She asked us to write a support letter for her, but I felt like we didn't need service coordination during the First Steps program in St. Louis. When we moved to Jefferson City, we had a wonderful service coordinator and learned for the first time what service coordinators can do for us. During the transition period we had a misunderstanding due to a large amount of information that we had to process and I wish there had been a pamphlet or something that we could have gone over after those meetings. My son benefited from First Steps and I hope your program will keep improving and serving more children in the future. Thank you.

Thank you. Although my child did not qualify for services after leaving this program, you helped me find a program through my husband's employer to help my child further. You have made a huge difference in our family and in my son's life.

Thank you First Steps.

My child had speech delay and I am convinced he would not be where he is today without First Steps. He is doing very well at this time. He was almost not accepted into First Steps. I hope this program continues to recognize and qualify children with delayed speech even if there aren't other apparent issues!

Question 10: Once we were assigned a coordinator!! Question 15: I educated myself. Leaving Question 1: I do not know but I don't think he would qualify based on his progress. We entered First Steps when it was transitioning to SSD and we "slipped through the cracks." It took five to six months from my initial contact until my son was evaluated. He only had a speech/language delay and only needed services for six months and he made significant progress. He was functioning at age appropriate levels and I did not feel the need to obtain further services through ECSE. I hope Governor Blunt and our legislation continues to support these services for families. Early intervention is the key to success for the future of our state!

First Steps was wonderful for our son. He excelled in speech and development in the program and we are thankful that the service is available. Thank you.

Question 9: No help was ever offered, not even one time. First Steps was a waste of time. Question 12: Not a one! Question 16: Waste of time! Question 17: Set my son back because he did not get help sooner. Transitioning Question 1: Was told, "He's three so we can't meet with you now. Bye. Question 2 was never discussed. Question 3: A month before and it was announced at the last minute. After leaving Question 5: No thanks to First Steps. Question 6: Trying anyway. My son required, in writing from his doctor, speech, occupational and behavioral therapy as well as home therapy equipment, (i.e. weighted vest, OT equipment). Not once was one single service provided. Nothing was done but a lousy IEP meeting one month before he was three. Your service is a waste of time and funds. Burn in hell First Steps. Our "caseworker" was Michelle Boyd, who would not answer/return my calls and when told of my son's RX for therapy and equipment said, "There's nothing I can do in your area." Did not call and check or even act interested. Her answer as soon as I told her was that she couldn't get us anything. How about looking first! I have gotten more help as to getting my son's needs met through the Social Services office and at least they referred me places! You people didn't even bother with that.

The services we received from 10/02 to 10/05 have helped us as a family and most of all our child. Our coordinator, went above and beyond to see our child received all the services needed. Between her and my son's occupational, physical and speech therapists, it helped our son in the YCDD school program at Dexter School System. This program is a great assist to all Missouri residents. Thanks again.

Our transition meeting is planned for two weeks from now, so this last section does not yet apply. The services my daughter received have impacted her so greatly. Her ability to communicate has grown immeasurably and helped her and our family for life.

Overall happy. There were problems with getting things done in a timely manner.

Thanks

I'm going through another custody battle with my daughter knowing that our permitted court papers were modified thanks to DFS services and was not able to respond to service (Improper service) papers that were served to me November 22, 2005. As of now child is with father in Waco and I'm fighting to get her back. In my residential custody it's a long and screwed up situation thanks to my social worker and DFS.

My therapist was great. With her help I was able to obtain what was needed to help my child be the best he can be. Without her I would have been lost. The do need more training with Cochlear Implants.

The First Steps Program has been a huge benefit to our family. Your resources have given our child confidence and strength. It has provided us with access to appropriate channels to accomplish those results. In addition, it has provided us with the knowledge to continue to use some of the skills learned to continue in the development of our child. Thank you.

We learned a lot from our therapists that worked with our daughter. We would have been lost without them. We had the "Dream Team" of therapists!

The change in my child is significant. She is attending Meadows and she loves it and we love to watch the results of their great teaching methods.

Thanks to First Steps my son now is speaking very clearly. We were at a road block with Damian's speech but when First Steps came in they were able to show us other ways that helped break through the wall. Wonderful!

My speech pathologist talked me into leaving my child in our home alone with her during therapy. Once alone, she abused our child leaving him with rug burns that have left scars. When I tried to speak to my First Steps coordinator, she would not return my calls and eventually sent a card with a cat on it. On the inside she wrote how sorry she was. I had to call her to find out what repercussions there would be. They wrote up a report with and I haven't heard since what happened. Here's the thing, Charity is a foster parent and speech pathologist for kids! Once in my home she mistreated my son because he didn't want to be alone with her. She could have broken his arm pulling on him (he was hiding between our couch and end table) and this person was ONLY written up...what about TERMINATION? I can guarantee this isn't the first incident. When I spoke with First Steps they were shocked she (Charity) advised me to leave my son alone with her. It is against First Steps rules. My son has not received any more services-at the time we were advised Charity was the best...is this the best for my son or Jackson County?

Our child had First Steps and we thought he would have to also receive ECSE services at the beginning. By the time First Steps was completed our child did not qualify for ECSE services because he was on target for his age. A very positive experience with First Steps. By the way, our child is a foster child.

First Steps was a wonderful experience for all of us. I would highly recommend it to anyone. There is not one aspect of the program that I was disappointed with. Thanks.

Our service coordinator was worried more about the money being spent on our child than the needs of our child. It was only after my four therapists protested, that we received ABA that she let us find an ABA therapist two months before his third birthday. In that two months our son reached more goals and accomplished more than the previous eight months. My husband and I even offered to pay out of pocket. We wonder now how much more we could have accomplished if we had help from our son's coordinator instead of her telling us just wait until he gets into school to get ABA. We feel that was an entire year lost.



I don't know the date exactly but when I first went through the process we fell through the cracks and were forgotten about. This was when my son was two years old. It would have been nice to get the services for three months before he turned three. I'm sure he would have had a lot more progress. But we did have good progress for the three months we received services and I thought that the therapist was great.

First Steps program really helped out our daughter and family. We are so thankful for the program and the teachers.

We will be forever grateful for the services we received from First Steps. It was beneficial not only to our special needs child and our other three children but to us as parents.

Once started, First Steps was great. Getting services started, however, took literally months.

Q4: We would have never known if not for the local early childhood center.

Q9: Sometimes.

Question 4 (After leaving): I am told she needs occupational therapy and the school district says that they won't pay.

My child currently receives speech, occupational therapy and special education to enhance his motor planning problems. By all indications he is on target to enter a regular kindergarten at age five or six. He would not be doing this well in early childhood had he not had First Steps. Please save the program. It is vital to helping our young children learn and develop.

Our daughter needed minimal physical therapy from being born premature. While we qualified, we did not need or actively engage in services beyond physical therapy and even then it was minimal. I don't feel we are overly "qualified" to answer most questions.

I have felt confident in using the advice given by my therapists. I had no previous experience with special needs children and through our therapist and our doctors, have gained a lot of knowledge and confidence in my ability to make our lives as normal as possible to the point that I don't feel that my special needs child is any different in her abilities than the others.

My child was not going to be eligible for SSD so I didn't go through the transition process.

Our Parents as Teachers person advised we have our son evaluated. When he was at about 18 months he spoke no words, played without making any sounds or babble and showed fear of many things touching him. Thanks to speech therapy and occupational therapy we can now communicate and hold our son. Within a year I got a hug and was able to hold him without screaming. He continues to improve through the ECSE program at the district. I now have a loving little boy. Thank you.

This is a great program. All the educators gave us timely and appropriate information and guidance. They also showed genuine care and concern for my child. We feel very lucky to have been introduced and part of this very important and needed program. Thank you.

Great program! We were very fortunate to have it when we needed it. It made a huge difference in our family. The therapist that worked with our son was very good.

Completely changed my daughter. In one month my daughter changed into a mature little girl in speech and social abilities. If it wasn't for First Steps we wouldn't have known how to help our child. We thought she was a normal two year old. We were first time dumb parents. We had no idea how much help she needed and we only had one month for all the paperwork and evaluations to be completed. I had a wonderful experience with First Steps. I will always be in debt to the help we received.

I question the experience of our speech therapist because I think more could have been done. Also, my son still needs speech therapy and cannot get it because none of the options worked for our family. We tried the head start program and that was just a horrible experience. Now my son gets nothing. I feel he has been "left behind." I also feel that we were treated unfairly because we were not a minority.

This program is excellent for children. It has helped my children very much. It was a great opportunity to meet people that could help both of my children. The only thing I would change is the age of qualifying children. I would make it until they were four or five due to the children getting used to working with the therapists and some places don't do extended in-home care when children need it. Thanks and you did a great job.

My daughter could talk but no one could understand her. I could barely understand her. First Steps started working with her and now we understand just about everything she says now. Thank you First Steps.

The First Steps program has been a godsend for us. They've done an outstanding job helping our child and our family. It is an invaluable program and worth every dollar the state of Missouri spends on it. I voted for Matt Blunt for Governor, but if he gets rid of this program, I will do everything I can to ensure that he will never again be re-elected. Unless you have a "special needs" child, you could never understand just how invaluable this program is. Go First Steps!

Comment for Question 4: Once we learned of First Steps and were able to make contact with the program, obtaining the services we needed was easy. However, the initial contact with the program was very frustrating! Prior to our first meeting, many calls were made that were NOT returned.

First Steps came into our life and helped us immensely when we found out our daughter had a hearing impairment. We were devastated, but the resources and services offered alleviated many worries. The people, service coordinator, etc. were great!

I love his speech therapist. I am not impressed at all with his lead teacher but I was impressed with the para professional. The speech therapist was wonderful to work with. She truly cared for his well being. He has blossomed in many ways. He is now enrolled at Border Star. I am very impressed with his teachers. I attribute all of my son's progress to them. He has made many strides, and now possesses the self confidence and abilities of other boys his age. However, I am not at all impressed with one of his other teachers. I find her rude and inappropriate. Fortunately, my son has very few special needs. I cannot imagine having a more challenged child in her class and having to hear the things she says and the way she says them.

I think the First Steps program is a very valuable program. There are just a few glitches that need attention. It takes what seems like forever to get a child into the program! I think the service coordinator was supposed to work with me, but she never contacted me once to ask if all was well or if I needed anything. All I ever saw were the bills for her time, but she never spent any time on our case! That seems very wrong! Our speech therapist was great. I would recommend her to anyone.

My son only had a few months with First Steps. Due to not having two or more delays, he only had a speech problem and I was told that at age two years old First Steps would not take him because he did not have two or more areas of concern and so I didn't get any services. Only until he was diagnosed with speech apraxia is when he received any help from First Steps. But at this time, he was already two months from his third birthday. I wish that we had more time with First Steps so that he could have gotten more out of this program. I never received any help except getting him into the Early Childhood center in Fox school district. I had wished to get more therapy at a low cost somewhere.

Our coordinator was awesome! She was always available and willing to help when needed. I feel that she excels in her position. She goes above and beyond her call of duty. She returns calls promptly and if she does not have an answer to a question, she researches and responds rapidly. She was a tremendous help to me and my family. She is an asset to First Steps.

Monique Jamison was our physical therapy provider. She does a wonderful job. I would recommend her to anyone. First Steps is a wonderful option. Great job to all.

First Steps is a great program. It really helped my son and with ECSE he is making great strides. His primary difficulty is in speech and language and this has improved dramatically. My only complaint is how long the placement took and not knowing if the program was secure due to possible budget cuts. I am very glad to see that the program has survived. Keep up the good work!

The Missouri First Steps program allowed our child to access speech services that he needed in order to be understood. Without those services, his speech would have been more than 50% unintelligible. You can imagine how frustrating this was for him-and the behavioral issues we faced because of it. He continues to willingly work with the early childhood speech pathologist to develop his articulation. Thank you to the First Steps program for literally giving my child a voice.

My son has a lot of medical needs. I don't know what we would do without First Steps. We spend a lot of money on medical bills and I am concerned about the new co pay system.

First Steps has helped our family a lot. We are so thankful for their services and all the therapists that my son had have all been very nice and worked well with him.

#21: The information provided came from my therapist.

I am an educator and learned about First Steps from a colleague. I had expressed concerns about my child to my Parents As Teachers educator more than once but had not been told about the program. I feel that the program should have been more visible as an early intervention possibility.

#21: It was confusing how to go about getting approved for therapy through the school system. After Leaving #1: He received services for a few months and now just has follow-up visits. After Leaving #6: Services provided did help but not currently receiving any.

The speech therapist did wonders for our son for the six months that she worked with him. He went from saying no words to saying 50-75, plus two or three words together. We were very thankful for this help. Not convinced that the occupational therapy helped a lot. The occupational therapist was actually an assistant occupational therapist. She was nice and pleasant, but our son didn't progress very much in the six months she worked with him. We loved our Parents As Teachers person. She's been with us since birth and has been a great source of information and a good sounding board. So thankful for her!

I feel that I could not answer these questions well due to the fact that my twins are quite normal! My family and I feel very blessed that we were accepted to First Steps but did not need the help because of the twins being mentally and physically alright. Just being ready for help by First Steps gave us peace of mind until we were sure that all was well.

First Steps came out to our home, assessed the foster child, and had speech therapy in place the next week. This child has made an improvement of fifteen months age equivalence in 11 months time. Before last year I had never heard of First Steps. We were sent to the program through Parents As Teachers.

Our daughter is involved in this program as relates to her speech only and will resume speech therapy during the coming school session.

First Steps was the best program. My son could not talk prior to his involvement. Within months, he was caught up in vocabulary and now is continuing to work on certain sounds. We also benefited from occupational therapy due to some sensory integration problems. We love First Steps.

I think the program is very effective and everyone I dealt with were easy to work with.

Missouri First Steps really helped my relationship with my daughter. After she worked on improving her speech we were able to get to know and understand each other so much better! Thank you so much for this!

I became aware of First Steps through a friend employed by Special School District. Also, it was mentioned through the Parents As Teachers program I was involved in with my daughter. My concern is that if I had not had those connections, I'm not sure my daughter would have received those valuable services. In other words, I think First Steps needs to be more visible so that new mom's are aware of their options. Do you have outreach programs through area hospitals?

It was so very helpful and understanding. She is doing very well and is a very helpful and understands what we say. Thanks. We are in Parents As Teachers and Story Bus.

Our service coordinator was wonderful. This First Steps program has been a god send and our son has made significant improvement thanks to First Steps.

#4: During transition period of First Steps. #10: Our service coordinator, once established, helped my family in a timely manner, get the services we needed.

It was very difficult to get started with the First Steps program. There were many phone calls and it was difficult to get a response. Once we finally got in the program it has been wonderful. The results have been dramatic and well worth the initial aggravation.

Our speech therapist did a wonderful job helping our son with speech development. Her observations led our son to occupational therapy for sensory integration therapy. This program really turned our son into a more "normal" child. He participates in programs at the area early childhood center and was able to be toilet trained at age three. Our family has greatly benefited from First Steps.

Thank you. My son is eating normally and behaves in all environments better than other children and I tell their parents about how you helped my son.

Our child received physical therapy and it was well-coordinated, well-executed and very beneficial.

The First Steps program was very effective in helping our son communicate. There was great improvement in the five months we were able to use First Steps.

It took quite some time for me to get services started for my foster son after he was placed here, but once they finally started everything was great and he got regular services. The only real problem I had was getting physical therapy for my child and even after inquiring a couple of times we never received services even though there was a plan for services.

The only problem I had with First Steps program was the speech therapist. The speech therapist didn't really help my son. Since he has been going to pre-school, he has improved in his talking. He is saying at least two words at a time. The occupational therapy teacher that he had was excellent. She knew his weaknesses and strengths. She helped him with his weaknesses.

I truly do not know what I would have done without First Steps. My son has progressed so well. In a lot of ways I feel like First Steps gave me my son by helping him be the person he is. I want to thank First Steps and the people we worked with. A very thankful parent.

Our service coordinator was a great help. Lots was accomplished. She even worked with us while she was away on family vacation.

My daughter no longer has special needs. She is a three-year-old who is healthy and fit.

Without First Steps we would not have been able to afford all the therapy that our son needed. We were pleased with all our therapists and our service coordinator.

This was an extremely positive experience for our family and our child. Our daughter benefited from speech therapy and loved our teacher.

This is such a great program. I know there is talk of discontinuing funding for this program and that would be truly tragic! They helped us so much and although we no longer need their help, I personally know many who do. I know I would have been hard pressed to pay two private specialists to give the help we received. Thank you to all who contributed!

The service coordinator needs to be easily assessed. My child's coordinator could not be reached early. I sometimes called her and left messages at her office and cellular phone and she seldom called back or waited for a long time to respond. Once I had to call the Jefferson City office to ask if she was still our coordinator because she did not respond to my calls at all. She said in February 04 that she would arrange the transition meeting in March but since March I could not reach her and our meeting ended up in May. Other than that, all the therapists were good and I would like to say thank you to them.

We really like our service coordinator. She was so good with the kids and they liked her so well. I would have her again if I was having another child but I am not. So I will tell someone else to ask for her.

I liked my service coordinator. She is so good with kids. She has patience with them. So I hope she stays on forever.

Q5: Physical therapy is not being received at this time. It is in the IEP. However, that is okay with parents.

I believe early intervention of First Steps helped tremendously. Our daughter will turn four next month. Even with Downs Syndrome, we have experienced very few delays and her speech is improving daily. Thank you to the First Steps and the therapists.

Our child did qualify for special education services. He was tested in the spring and continued speech therapy all summer. He tested out of his one IEP goal after two weeks. Thanks First Steps!

Other than having a slow start, we had five weeks of compensatory services when our son turned three, everything else went smoothly. We were not part of the First Steps program for long, but continue with much support and guidance from the regional center.

I feel the program helped my child progress greatly but because she "slipped through the cracks" in the beginning, I think she was delayed even further. And I feel she would have benefited even more had she been allowed to continue at the school. I feel she had no less of a delay than other children attending. Thank you.

Our family has changed along with our beautiful son. For all your help and sincerity, we have a young child who is extremely smart and such a happy child. Without First Steps, I don't know where I would be. Thank you.

First Steps was an excellent program for my son. Without this program he would not have received the therapies to the extent he needed them. The team approach of the therapists and parents working together in the child's home environment is essential. We cannot imagine where our son would be without having had these services!

I don't know what I would have done without First Steps. I hope that there will continue to be funding for such a wonderful program.

First Steps is a wonderful program. I believe it helps many children reach developmental goals that without First Steps they may not have been able to achieve. I was slightly displeased with our service coordinator. My daughter's speech therapist coordinated most of the transition process to our local school district, not the service coordinator.

We have two children in the First Steps Program. One son was two when we started getting help with you and he is now three and a half. Our second son was one year old and now he is a year and eleven months old.

I feel that the therapies my child received while in First Steps helped her and made her more prepared for services through the school which are provided in our home due to compromised immune system. The First Steps coordinator did not do a good job with helping us or the transition period. I was the one that kept after the school district to get the services started again, which I understand she should not have gone without if everything was handled correctly. I have heard on television that they may do away with First Steps in our area because of budget cuts. We did not get Medicaid and could not afford these therapies without First Steps. I can't imagine how far behind she would be at age three if she didn't receive these services. Also, the therapists at the school are too busy with so many kids that they don't have the time to see the children more than once a week and there's no way to reschedule if school is out or the therapist or child is sick.

We felt lost before utilizing the First Steps program. My son has improved greatly over the past year and a half. Everyone was so helpful and we loved our speech therapist. Thank you for all your help.

It was very difficult to get started in this program, and the therapists told us of all available therapy they felt was needed. I wish I could've found out about this earlier. Some of the therapists I feel take advantage of their billing hours. There was only one we felt truly billed for time on premises, not paperwork, etc. She is what truly honest people do to help out, do her job, for honest pay. Thank you.

First Steps was a gift from God for our son. It made a difference in his life and future.

Our son was born premature and was in intensive care for four weeks. They had no connection with First Steps and were not able to give any help with finding out about the program. Every hospital should be knowledgeable about the program and letting parents with special needs children aware of such programs. The program has been a tremendous benefit for my child and he received excellent services.

We loved the program and it is a very special/helpful program.

The First Steps program was the greatest gift to our family. We had been struggling so much, yet did not realize the magnitude of our son's delays and disabilities and how these were impeding his development. My only complaint with First Steps was that it took four months for us to get through the intake process to begin receiving services. I do not want the Governor to take away or change this program at the expense of these children who so desperately need help. I will gladly accept a tax increase if it means giving these children the support they need. First Steps has been a life saver!

I have been obviously very happy with First Steps. It has helped my son so very much.

My son received speech services for six months. He was essentially non-verbal and within six months he was at or above average. I am a speech therapist and was not able to achieve much progress with my son as he thought of me as "mom" not "teacher." Although it took two evaluations to get services - It was the best thing that could have happened to him. The therapists and coordinators were exceptionally caring and professional. I would hate to think of what his communication skills would be like without this intervention. This is a very important service. Our entire family has benefited.

At six months of age his doctor recommended therapy. As I recall, we were originally referred to a special services program for First Steps Services. It was a delay and they did nothing for five to six months. Then finally on one of my calls to them I was told they weren't going to be providing services at all. We were referred to a center for First Steps services. We then got the help that our little one so badly needed. Prior to First Steps, he drug himself everywhere. He could not sit without assistance. He could not crawl or walk. He learned to sit and crawl at approximately eighteen months and walked at two years. It looks like our child will always have some disabilities. First Steps has made a big difference in his life.

The program is crucial to the kids of this state. I had never heard of the program until our son was fourteen months old. In the year and a half he was in the program, he received occupational, physical, speech, and sensory integration. He made great progress in all areas and eventually tested out of occupational therapist and SI. Our therapists were very knowledgeable and my son responded well to each one of them. I hate to think where he would have been without this program. He would never have walked or talked.

First Steps is a wonderful program. They helped so much. I wish I could get involved to help just like they helped me.

We loved the program and miss our speech teacher and developmental therapist.

It was such a blessing!

First Steps was the best thing that ever happened to my family. I watched my son go from barely functioning to above average. I wish so badly I would of known about this program for my first son. First Steps can be the life changing/improving difference. My kids really miss the therapists and the therapy.

Because of the First Steps program, I am hoping with all the hard work we have gone through that this will mature our son. I am hoping he will not be labeled as ADD or ADHD. If I did not have First Steps and other programs, I truly feel I would still be struggling with him. This program was a wonderful gift that has helped our child in so many ways.

Our child barely qualified for any help after First Steps.

He's going to start head start and Pre-K pretty soon. Thank you.

Way too much paperwork processed!

I am fortunate our family received services from First Steps. They helped me to get the ball rolling and guided me as to where and how to get my a diagnosis of Autism. The program got us involved with many other agencies. The county services played a very important role in helping my son and our family. We have a community of support that is invaluable to us and to many other families, as such I have also begun a letter writing campaign to Governor Blunt and other representatives so they will continue funding for this invaluable program and all other related agencies. Without the programs and funding for them to continue, my family and thousands of others will be devastated because of the lack of services. Thank you!

I think that our therapy could have been more effective. My son is now enrolled in the school district's speech therapy program and I have learned more in two sessions with his current therapist then I did in a year with our First Steps therapists. I think therapy should focus on the child and the family! More emphasis could be placed on training the parents to help their child. Thus, more progress would be made in the long run. Thank you!

My son is like a different person! He has really "grown up" and made some nice progress. He is doing things we didn't know he would ever do and totally enjoying his school. Thanks First Steps.

This child is in foster care and has a history of neglect as well as physical and possibly sexual abuse. She has had numerous ear infections and has fetal alcohol syndrome. She did not begin receiving help through First Steps until well after her second birthday, then had ear tubes inserted, an abscessed tooth removed, and other outside evaluations concerning speech, language, motor skills, cognitive ability in connection with FAS. I am sure First Steps had a role in her improved behavior, speech, and motor skills, however, she's had such huge "life changes" during the last several months, I find it difficult to rate the impact of services received.

First Steps was very helpful to our family and our child. The therapists are very professional and knowledgeable and also very supportive. We greatly appreciate everything First Steps did for our family.

Our family greatly appreciates all the help and services which we have received. The therapists are very professional, supportive and knowledgeable. We learned a lot from each and every one of them. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Well, I'm just pretty glad that I have made the right decision as far as choosing you as her care giver. Thanks.

We truly believe that the First Steps program has been the key to our son developing into a child with normal abilities. Our service provider was a superb resource for us because she showed us what to do and talked with us about how to work with our son on a daily basis so he could continue to develop at a steady pace. The doctor's printed a very serious gloom and doom picture of our son's mental and physical development. Thanks to the help of First Steps, we beat the statistics!

Our child progressed rapidly with his speech difficulties. Today he attends a regular pre-school and is doing well. First Steps and the Special Learning Center were so great in their help with our son!

My daughter no longer is in First Steps. She is in Headstart. While she was in First Steps, it really helped us both. She is partially deaf in one ear and her right hip has trouble. She had physical therapy for one year. Thank you for your concern.

The First Steps program is essential to any family with a child with special needs. I had no idea that this program existed or that my child needed speech therapy until my Parents As Teachers informed me. I believe this will help my child learn correctly on his spelling and speech and is a great benefit to him. I was devastated when I heard that our newly elected Governor Matt Blunt was going to cut this program and contacted my representative and senator accordingly.

We don't receive First Steps now cause son is three years old now. We like program when we had it but now we don't.

I was very disappointed with the way things were handled and the teachers programs. It was very difficult to get my son signed up and then to get appointments made. The very few appointments that were made, several were no shows. The other few were cancelled. The teachers that did come out were very rude and hateful. I had gotten so fed up that I cancelled my son out of this service and would never recommend it to anyone. I thought this service was the biggest joke next to Parents As Teachers. Somebody needs to start a more professional program for children in need!

I went to the IEP meeting alone and was denied an IEP or any services for my child. The school district concluded that out son did not meet the standards of IDEA to be considered a child with a developmental delay.

Wonderful program! My adopted girl from Kazakhstan really needed these services. Very professional help.



Our son met all his goals and did not need any other services after First Steps. The best part of our program was our speech therapist. Her work and care for our son were extraordinary.

I believe early intervention is so important. I (we) can see such an improvement in our child's speech-social skills. Although he has improvements yet to make we are seeing the gains and we are very pleased!

Our experience with the First Steps program has been pleasant, informative, constructive and of course an incredible improvement in our son's communication and social development. I am a little shady on the process that will follow after his transition time, but I'm sure I will, through the therapist and others, be informed (or reminded) as to what comes next. Thank you for this opportunity and we look forward to what comes next and for all that has already been provided for us.

The transition from First Steps into the ECSE was very difficult. While in the First Steps program family is encouraged and expected to participate in hands on with child's therapy. ECSE discourages and prohibits family to be an active participant in the class. It is extremely difficult to completely turn your child over to the school. There should be some sort of transition period. Also, I attended meetings in order to have my child in extended school and continued therapy during the summer. We arrived at the school to find that the teacher appointed for extended school was not a special needs teacher and did not know sign language and no therapist showed up in order that my child would have therapy for the summer - which was very discouraging.

Our son received speech therapy through First Steps and it gave him the confidence he needed to start talking. Without First Steps, I believe our child would have been developmentally behind, and it would have created many more problems if we would have had to wait until he was three years old to get help. We would not afford speech therapy on our own, and our health insurance would not cover it. Keep First Steps! It is vital, not optional.

I am very, very thankful for First Steps and the help my son received. Without the early intervention, I am not sure where he would be. I do wish that the school system would allow the family to be more a part of his development than it does. The communication breaks down and it is difficult to know what to work on in order to reinforce what he is learning during therapy. Sometimes I feel like there is an agenda other than what is simply best for our son.

Great program.

Our service coordinator was very helpful in setting up services for our twins. However, he was an independent contractor for First Steps. When my boys were two and half years old, we were forced to use a First Steps coordinator. I'm not sure what her name was. She never met us and was not helpful at all with our services or our transition. Our first coordinator took care of everything prior to us getting reassigned. The First Steps services were wonderful and I hope they are not terminated for others that truly "need" services.

I filled out for our recent graduate of First Steps. I had one previous (Age 4 3/4 now) and one current (age six months). We are moving to St. Louis County as of September 4 to get better service for our special needs children (more therapists, choices, etc.) and better access to a School for the Blind.

First Steps is one of the most important programs available to children and families. It's importance and funding should never be questioned or cut!

Therapists were wonderful. Service coordinators needed more supervision. They were not timely in phone calls and scheduled visits. We went through three trying to find one that took part in the road toward helping our child. In our IEP meeting the coordinator came to the meeting in "Saturday clothes." While this is not horrendous, it just represents a lack of motivation and importance of a child.

First Steps was a godsend for my son. I am a divorced mother of two with very little support, until First Steps. My older son was diagnosed ADHD/Bipolar at the age of two and I had never heard of First Steps. It was not until my now three-year-old started having difficulties similar to his older brother that I became involved with the program. I cannot express the gratitude I feel toward the caseworkers and therapists that worked with my littlest son. I am sure without the early intervention and support that was given to me and my boys through First Steps, my little guys would not be doing as wonderfully as he is today.

The early intervention has been critical to our son's success with speech development. My family is grateful for the First Steps program and the school district's early childhood program.

Through the First Steps program, we received services at the Special Learning Center. In-home therapy would not work. Our child has benefited through therapy and their preschool, and still continues there through our school district. We are very thankful for our services and this early intervention is making our child a productive child and will save thousands of dollars of future services both educationally and medically. Thank you.

First Steps was wonderful and helpful.

We have a wonderful coordinator! She has been a friend to us and has been a great help!

With our service coordinator and the therapists help, our son is now a social butterfly and is speaking very well. His motor skills are so good that he is becoming a little artist. Thank you First Steps.

I first contacted First Steps in November of 2004 as recommended by our pediatrician for care of what, at the time, was thought to be an isolated language delay. I spoke with a First Steps representative who, after a telephone assessment, said we were not eligible because deficits were not severe enough. We subsequently obtained a private speech/language therapist who felt signs of Autism were present. Our doctor then gave our son a provisional of PDD. First Steps was reenacted and our son was evaluated and found eligible in late January of 2005, only 2 months before his third birthday. Our son was then diagnosed with Autism by a specialist in March of 2005. IFSP and transition meetings were done on the same first meeting in early February of 2005. We were able to get speech/language and occupational therapy, four evaluations with two weeks of therapy prior to the loss of First Steps benefits. My compliments to our service coordinator for expediting our care. She was thorough, thoughtful and very attentive to our concerns. Since leaving First Steps we had an IEP drawn up. We initially received services because our son attended daycare in the city. We then declined all service because, after further research, we felt the services offered by the school district were inadequate (with ABA) so we have pursued 20 hours of ABA, 2 hours speech/language and 1 hour of occupational therapy weekly.

This is a wonderful program. We have seen incredible strides with our daughter. It is not only important for our state to maintain this program, but imperative! Thank you First Steps!

It was initially hard to find the right contacts for First Steps. Once started, everything was wonderful. Our service coordinator was very helpful with the needs of our family and both speech therapists were great in helping my child.

Thank you! Words cannot express our gratitude to the First Steps program. Our son made remarkable strides in development during our time in your program. It made transitioning into the Special School District very easy. All of our therapists were outstanding. It was a pleasure to get to know them and to see how wonderful each one was in working with our son. Our hope is that your wonderful program is able to continue. It made a world of difference in our family! Thank you.

My son was cared about from the time he started to the time he finished. We still talk to the teachers who helped my son and we're good friends. Now, thanks to your help, I can still lean on them for help. P.S. I don't understand why we have a man in the office who's not helping our kids today.

The First Steps program helped me as a mom to learn how to show my son that I love him. I wasn't sure he was getting it at first. Now he says "I love you momma." First Steps bridged the hole in our family to our son. Thank you!

While our child currently does not need further interventional services, if he did, I would not know who to contact. I've not spoken to anyone affiliated with First Steps in many months. All of the contact I've had has been with Parents As Teachers. I am extremely grateful for the services that were provided, but I am also somewhat disappointed at the lack of communication. Our son only needed physical therapy. He has since met or exceeded all the goals set. I cannot express our heart-felt thanks and appreciation enough for the First Steps program. Our son is a happy, healthy, thriving toddler with your help. Great job!

First Steps, recommended and set up by our geneticist, was wonderful for our family. My son received occupational, physical and speech services early on which has helped him tremendously. He has Down's syndrome and he signs 75 to 100 words, runs, jumps, follows 2-3 step orders and his transition was good. But, if DESE needs to work on anything, it would be ECSE with the school systems. Put in place a plan where therapy is a programmed plan. Did you know they can have therapy on a stage or in a hall? It does not have to be a structured room. This is not helpful to learning. Where are we helping these kids? We need to do better here.

Our child and family, as a whole, has benefited greatly since receiving services through First Steps. Without those services our child's development would be extremely delayed and would not be where she is today. She is a happy little girl whose speech can be understood.

We didn't come up with any definitive cause for the speech delay, and we still haven't, but everything about the First Steps process has been easy and the best possible help we could have asked for. Thanks.

Some of the therapists were more familiar with our child's disability than others. The service coordinator seemed to carry a full load and did only what was absolutely necessary for our child. Sometimes our statements would show payments for service coordination or correspondence which we did not have. Overall, First Steps was a positive experience. However, I actively participated in all aspects of rearing our child and will continue to be her first educator. Most of our child's services were cut in half when she left First Steps and entered ECSE. The therapists are good, but they don't have enough time in their schedules for our daughter to receive the same amount of therapy time she had in First Steps. I do not believe throwing more money into the system is the answer. Trimming the fat and better organization may help the ECSE program. Even though we benefited from First Steps, I supported Governor Blunt's cut because I feel the program needed a "wake up call" to eliminate waste.

I assume that you are talking about my second son which is seven months old. My first son that was in First Steps was four months old.

We have two service coordinators. The first one was pretty much non-existent and never called when she said she would. There was no follow-up, etc. The therapist had many personal issues which led to many cancellations. When our child only received 30 minutes/weekly, cancelling two weeks in a row was significant. She was not good about leaving us session notes. We had no clue if she had even been there, and if she had, what had been worked on? I am very disappointed in the service we received and had I known it would be like this, I would've rather paid and received therapy instead of wasting precious time.

The First Steps program was absolutely vital to our needs. When our daughter was diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome, we did not know how to meet her needs completely. With the help of this program, we are now much more confident.

At the time our child was to go through transition, our service coordinator was changed, due to changes at First Steps. It took two months to find out who our new service coordinator would be, and we didn't receive much help with transition. Our first service coordinator was excellent. She was very helpful and prompt with responding to us and knowledgeable of our child's needs.

Our child doesn't get enough speech therapy, which was brought to everyone's attention. However, it's not available to him. Also, we need assistance with his hearing aids.

First Steps intervention helped my son not need services beyond three years old.

The First Steps program was a tremendous asset to our family at a very difficult time. It's never easy to find that a child of yours is having problems. What a relief to have people to turn to for help and advice. The therapists we used were very knowledgeable and helpful. They gave us a good foundation so that my child could make a very smooth transition. He is making excellent progress thanks to the early intervention of First Steps. What a wonderful program.

More communication is required from representatives of the First Steps program with families that require the services. It would be helpful if there were documents complete with up to date information on the First Steps program. Response time of service coordinators is poor; most likely due to workload. It would be beneficial if all school districts followed the state in benefits for the children eligible for First Steps and IEP program. The school district does not allow some therapy, strategies or methodologies which are available to families with children in the IFSP program according to state law.

Because we were not familiar with First Steps, the initial process was confusing. I did not know what First Steps was, how it was paid for and what it did. I was very suspicious of the motives because I had never heard of them and did not continue the process until I spoke with my family doctor and she explained who and what First Steps was about. Maybe I was just in denial about my son's disabilities? Once I understood, I have been very happy with his treatment and therapy.

For families who move to Missouri, there needs to be better communication about the overall program, all potential resources, and how to best access those resources. The websites are somewhat helpful but there could be better links. Often we felt like we had to ask the questions to obtain any information, which is very difficult when you are not familiar with programs, guidelines, restrictions, etc. It's imperative to have service coordinators who are very familiar with the many resources and how to access them. Since the restructuring of service coordinator last July, our response time with our service coordinator has decreased due to nearly doubling her caseload. Our child received all the therapies he needed through the First Steps program. However, once our child turned three years old, his current IFSP doesn't include early intervention, namely ABA, therapy, because the Ft. Zumwalt School District refuses to name any specific teaching strategies or methodologies in the IFSP. Many therapists and teachers are not familiar with ABA therapy and how to implement it. There are specific individuals in our school district who try to use a cookie cutter approach and just look at the bottom line (i.e., how much money is saved to the school district) instead of advocating what is appropriate and needed.

We are so pleased with the ease and excellent level of support we received with First Steps. The early intervention really helped our child. She has been out of the program for some time now and is actually thriving in a large part thanks to First Steps. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Great program!

This program has been very informative, helpful and encouraging to our family for my son's needs and helping him to live a better life. I hope this program stays around a long time to help others in the future.

First Steps was a god send for our son. He went from extremely disabled (non-verbal) to age appropriate in eleven months. I do not believe intervention would have been as successful if it hadn't been as early as his was. His speech/language pathologist was truly amazing. Our son recently started preschool with no diagnosis and you'd never know he's a First Steps graduate. We are so grateful!

First Steps is a great program. It was a great help for my daughter. Thank you.

First Steps is a very valuable program to children with disabilities as well as the parents. My son would not be who he is today without the services and the expertise and care we received from the providers. Where would we be without it? I owe so much to the program and everyone involved in my son's life.

We are extremely grateful for the services we were and are being provided. First Steps is a great program and we believe the services we've received have made a huge difference in our son's development. We are fortunate to have this program in our state!

My son has come such a long way from being in the program and I greatly appreciate everything.

We've not heard about setting up classes for this fall. Based on these questions, I'm guessing that she is no longer eligible for services.

I felt, at times, totally disconnected to my service coordinator. Not a thorough understanding during the transition period and after. Not enough information to know what to do and how to proceed now that we are no longer in First Steps. Initial contact was from a friend that used the services, otherwise, I would not have known about the program.

We accidentally found First Steps on the internet that was based in Florida. We had to actively search for someone who knew about First Steps locally and who had a number. Once we got our service coordinator, it went much more smoothly. However, we needed to keep asking if there was anything else we can do for her. We had a very positive experience with Boone County Family Services. They were especially helpful when we transitioned to ECSE and helped with some roadblocks we encountered. I couldn't have gotten through without them and I am very grateful. Boone County Family Services then called me and said my daughter was a good candidate for the Lopez Waiver. They got everything done and coordinated. She did get the waiver and that has been our family's lifesaver. Boone County Family Services were and are awesome. We are very thankful.

Our physical therapist was awesome. First Steps was an exceptional program. What a great help it was to our family. Thank you for offering First Steps!

First Steps is a vital program. I felt we were very well taken care of. If Matt Blunt ever (again) decides it is unnecessary, I will do my part to ensure it never goes away. Great service, great therapist and I felt like we were priority. P.S. Our daughter is now 3 and half years old and never, ever stops talking.

First Steps has helped me out a lot. I am glad that we have a program like that. That can help kids that need it. If it wasn't for First Steps, my son would still be behind in speech.

We're just getting started in the program.

I did not know about First Steps until my child was two and half years old so he only received about two months of services. He just needed to be in it longer. He is doing better and is in preschool now. We need to increase his speech. I feel they don't do enough therapy and that is the main reason he goes there.

If Blunt attacks the program again, I'll diligently work to replace him in 2008. I'm a life-long Republican! My daughter's neurologist believed she would never make it as far as she had. I think a large portion of this is due to First Steps which will translate into savings for the state in the future.

We were very thankful for the speech therapy our son received. By the time he was two, he had nearly caught up to where he should be. Thanks.

I had a great experience with First Steps and it's nice to know that these resources are available to me in Missouri.

We did access Parents As Teachers simultaneously with the First Steps program. The First Steps and Parents As Teachers are fabulous programs and offer the children a better chance in life! Please, Governor Blunt, I voted for you and had your sign on my front lawn during the election. Please provide for children and get tough with Jessica's Law for Missouri to protect our children from predators!

Great team. Great resources. Love the communication.

My only concern was that it was difficult to get my son into the program because he was borderline through many areas including speech and social interaction. We finally had to get a diagnosis from the neurologist to be accepted. However, our service coordinator was wonderful in walking us through the steps for acceptance. As a result of First Steps, my son has improved dramatically and we are very grateful to the state of Missouri for providing such services.

Only after leaving First Steps did I truly realize how much we learned from our therapists. We were new parents so we would not have known how to help our child meet milestones in creative ways. My child would not be doing so well without this program. We are involved parents.

Speech was the only thing my child had a problem with. Since First Steps, he is now testing at the right age group. Thank you for that!

I think the First Steps program was excellent. The therapist, the service coordinator and everyone else were very kind and understanding of our concerns and questions. I would recommend the program to a parent with a special needs child based on the great experience we've received from them. If it weren't for them, my son would have probably never started walking. Thanks so much!

First Steps was a great help for our child! We are no longer receiving services.

My daughter and myself was very satisfied with First Steps. If it was not for them, my daughter would not be where she is today.

We had a super experience with the program. The only problem was keeping providers (therapists). They come and they go. Same thing with ECSE. Thanks for all you do!

The therapist that came to our house was excellent; however, the process of keeping in contact with our "service coordinator" was a bit of a hassle and seemed unnecessary. Further, I did not need to receive monthly statements identifying how much everyone was being paid. Was this just a reminder that although the services were free to me, they had a cost? It was an unnecessary mail and paperwork expense.

The First Steps program has made a world of difference in my daughter. Without it we would be two years behind instead of one year. They brought the services to me which was very important to me as daughter did not like clinical settings. My service coordinator was always available when I had a question. The people of Missouri are lucky to have this program. It would be a tragedy if they were to lose it.

Everyone seemed to go the extra mile for my family and made everything much more comforting, and gave me a bunch of knowledge about my child. Everyone was great! Very satisfied. Thank you.

Because of the early intervention our child received, she is thriving as a healthy two year old!

Therapy scheduling has been difficult due to doctor's visits, tests, lab, hospital visits, etc. and seizure activity. I hope that things smooth out soon.

First Steps greatly benefited my child. She was watched closely which helped her advance as much as possible.

I can't express in words how First Steps has helped my child. This program is very beneficial not only to the children, but the parents as well. Please see the attached letter. Thank you.

August 29, 2005

Ms. Melodie A. Friedebach  
Assistant Commissioner  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
PO Box 480  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480

Dear Ms. Friedebach,

Thank you for the survey regarding the First Steps program. Although you asked for comments regarding the program, I thought this letter written in February, 2005 would be the best way to describe my feelings on how the program has helped us.

Governor Blunt, I have a few questions for you. What hopes and dreams do you have for your children? Do you wonder what college they will they go to? What will they be when they grow up? When will they get married and have children of their own?

Oh, the hopes and dreams for people with children without genetic or health problems. My hopes and dreams are a little different. My hopes and dreams started with would he talk, would he walk and now at will he stay age appropriate. We don't venture much further down the time path than that. I live in a different world than you do.

I know the Missouri First Steps program works because I used it. My son has a genetic disorder. The first diagnosis was a horrible disorder called Rubinstein-Tabies. Our son was six months old at the time. To put this mildly, this was very hard news to receive. Our 'best case' scenario was hoping one day he could live in a halfway house for the disabled. There is no treatment or cure for this genetic syndrome.

We were told by his geneticist, his geneticist counselor and his physician early intervention was key. The first three years are critical. My husband and I thought, "What do we do?" We were told about a program called First Steps. They provide screening and services for people in our situation. At six months he was evaluated for the first time for cognitive, gross and fine motor skills. We had a wonderful therapist named Sherri Headrick. She worked with our son and after one year he was age appropriate. He graduated from physical therapy. We are one of the lucky ones. Sherri stated it is not very often that she is able to release a child before he moves into the next stage of the program, Bright Beginnings, at age three. He was evaluated every six months to make sure he was age appropriate. At a year and a half, back we went to the geneticist. A new year, a new diagnosis. Now he doesn't have Rubinstein-Tabies but rather blepharophthalmos. Not as grim an outcome as the first diagnosis but still not a shiny picture. He was evaluated again by First Steps and now he was in need of speech therapy. Once again we had wonderful therapists for speech therapy, Rebecca Suppes and Tina Demp. He is still receiving speech therapy and will turn three at the end of this month. He has been tested by the next step to help these children, Bright Beginnings, and he will qualify for speech in that program as well.

We are happy to report that he is now in a Montessori program and doing fine integrating with the other children. We believe part of that was due to First Steps. Once again, we are one of the lucky ones. Please do not cut this program.

Not only has he been saved from trying to catch up later in life but also the ridicule of being different at a very young age when the mind and child are so fragile.

The Kansas City Star stated the funds are being cut to fund schools. Who do you think gets these children after age three? The answer is the public school districts. The program called Bright Beginnings. Maybe I should not mention it, for fear of it being cut as well. Would taxpayers rather spend the money up front to help challenged children or later when, because of the lack of early support, they require more assistance.

The problem with use of private insurance is that insurance currently covers disabilities from accidents not from genetic defects. I know this first hand since prior to finding First Steps I had spoken with our private insurer. I thought surely it must be covered. I found out quickly that it is not.

Most, if not all, of these children have struggled since birth fighting the odds. Now they have one more obstacle. These children cannot help the way they are. By eliminating this program you are saying they do not deserve help.

Governor Blunt says, "Missouri taxpayers can't afford the program." Well, guess what, I am a Missouri tax payer and I say we cannot afford not having this program. They are my tax dollars and I should say where they go. My vote is here.

This is a wonderful program and I hope others continue to receive the benefits and services it provides. Thank you again for asking and for listening.

The area intake coordinator is overwhelmed with the number of kids to question about services. We had several delays from the initial phone call to actually starting services. Make up times of services was included in our action plan. We received language services and it has been very helpful for our child and the whole family.

The First Steps program benefited our son as well as our entire family. Having trained therapists working with us really gave our son the help he needed. The First Steps program is so valuable and the benefits are great.

Great program. Blunt has done damage that we will all eventually pay for when special needs children go to school and require more service than they would if they had received adequate early intervention.

The only problems we had were in regards to service coordinators. We had four different coordinators in the year and a half years we were in the program. We also had three different speech therapists. Although they were all great! I understood that changes are unavoidable, but without a consistent coordinator, I felt I was on my own to find therapists and answer my questions when they came up.